This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

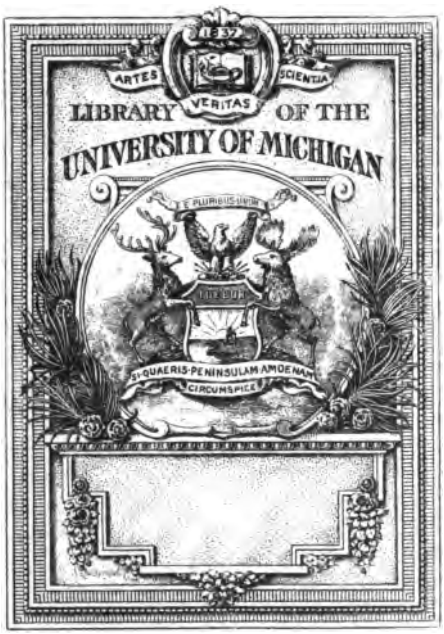
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`


1837
ARTES
VERITAS
SCIENTIA
LIBRARY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
E PLURIBUS UNUM
TUEBOR
SI QUAERIS PENINSULAM AMOENAM
CIRCUMSPICE

828
M235w

60

THE WHITEST MAN

By

CARRIE J. MAKEPEACE

© J.F. 3-21-07

BOSTON: RICHARD G. BADGER
The Gorham Press
1905

Copyright 1905 by CARRIE J. MAKEPEACE

All rights reserved

PRINTED AT
THE GORHAM PRESS
BOSTON, U. S. A.

TO
THE MEMORY OF MY HUSBAND
THIS STORY IS
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

156486

PREFACE.

The chief purpose of this book is the exaltation of motherhood.

CARRIE J. MAKEPEACE.

CHAPTER I

Love's Labor Lost

IT WAS twilight in dear old Boston, and the lights had just been turned on outside our home on Huntington Avenue, but not within, where I was sitting, pensive and alone. I heard in the hall the slow, soft footsteps of my friend, Helen Greenwood, and rose to receive her. As she entered the drawing-room the gleaming light outside shone through the window, resting on her face, and revealed a vision of perfect loveliness. "I have good news," she exclaimed, "and I know you will rejoice with me, for my brother whom I have not seen for three years is on his way to Boston." "I am glad for your sake that Fred is coming," I replied, not knowing it would mark an epoch in my life. I had never seen Helen look so happy and beautiful. Her face was radiant with joy, her voice full of melody and love as she announced the happy tidings. Fred Garland and Helen Greenwood were orphans: neither could remember their parents, who were lost at sea while on a voyage to England to say "farewell" to the maternal grandmother of Fred and his sister, when Fred was three years of age and baby Helen but eleven months, and during the parents' absence they were left at home in the care of the nurse. The aged grandmother, waiting anxiously for her beloved daughter and son-in-law, whom she had not seen since their wedding-day, never knew the reason they

did not come to her, as they had written that they would, on receiving the message that she had but a short time to live. One week after the disaster at sea she closed her weary eyes and folded her pale hands, saying, "I know I will surely see them on the morrow." Then she sank to sleep never to awaken here. Let us hope that her children did meet her on the other shore, and bid her "Good-morning."

Fred and Helen had an uncle, who was appointed their guardian, and to whom he was ever kind and true; but Helen Greenwood had always been hungry for a mother's love, and her brother never ceased to dream of the lovely woman, whose picture he constantly wore, whom he dimly remembered calling "Mamma" in babyhood.

It is a great misfortune for a boy to be left motherless in this sinful world, but his gentle sister had guarded him from temptation as far as possible. A mother could not have been more watchful or unselfish. Sometimes Fred fancied that he could remember his parents kissing him "Good-bye" when they started on that fatal voyage. Their uncle was exceedingly fond of them, and was very glad to have them in his home, where the sweet influence of childhood was unknown. He was like a father to them, and they bestowed that loving title upon him; but the craving and yearning of their young hearts for a mother's love was intense, as no one had ever filled that vacant place in their affections. Their uncle's wife did her duty by them, but no strong affection existed. They never called her mother, she was simply "Aunty." She was cold and reserved by nature, and the children's tact had taught them to be distant and respectful. They flung

aside their cold demeanor when alone with their uncle, but never with their aunt, who admired their dignified ways and was very proud of their manner toward her.

Helen was married to a minister ten years her senior, when she reached the sweet period of womanhood of twenty summers; and her brother at the age of twenty-two, while on a visit to a cousin in Seattle, Washington, met a young lady a few years younger than himself, whom he married after a brief acquaintance.

His wife's parents earnestly desired them to remain for a while at least, and he acceded to their request, remaining with them three years. His father-in-law, Mr. Strong, died during the time, and Fred deferred a visit east in consequence. He held a fine position in business with his brother-in-law, Gerald E. Strong, who was a prosperous young merchant. Fred's longing to see his sister was all but irresistible, and the first time that he left his young wife was to come east.

His uncle and aunt were dead, leaving Helen, my dearest friend, his only relative.

I was an only child, but I always knew I never could have loved an own sister more than I loved beautiful Helen Garland, now the wife of Rev. Paul Greenwood. We had played together in the happy days of childhood, had attended the same schools, and were classmates. I had no admiration for Fred, but his lovely sister was my ideal. I loved her none the less now that she was married. In fact I loved her more, if possible, for it seemed to me that as a minister's wife her rare talents were wasted. I was far from being religious, being exceedingly fond of gay society and all the pleasures the world could offer, particularly of dancing, an amusement

of which the Rev. Mr. Greenwood did not approve.

His wife was a little saint, and did everything within her power to please her Lord and Master; but I used to feel I was her safety valve, for what little sin there was lurking in her makeup she gave vent to when alone with me. Somehow I flattered myself that she loved me, naughty Irma Wild, more than she did her pious husband. She never complained of him, but I fancied the restraint that ministers' wives feel was most irksome to her.

A great deal of work in the church and out of it is always expected of them. They must ever be meek and pious, anxious to listen to every tale of woe, perfectly unselfish, and capable of forgetting that life is something to be appreciated and enjoyed. Helen had no jealousy in her composition, an element a minister's wife should not possess. "Mrs. Greenwood was cut out for a minister's wife," people said of her. But I knew there was a little corner in her big loving heart the minister did not satisfy. I made myself believe that I filled the vacancy, and occupied the first place in her affection, as she did in mine; but when her brother came, and I witnessed their fond greeting, when I saw her cling tightly to him, and look lovingly into his brown eyes, when I saw her turn pale with joy, and tremble with emotion, then I knew she loved her brother best. I was jealous, and hurried out, not waiting to speak to him myself, after all those years of absence. I had been making a morning call, but I knew she would not miss me, and obviously she never did recall the fact that I was present when he arrived at her home.

The following day she sent me an invitation to spend

the evening with them. I was half-tempted to decline. Smile if you will, dear reader, that I was jealous of this handsome brother of hers. If you are a woman and never loved another woman you will be amused I am sure. But if you are a man perhaps you may be capable of understanding how it is possible for one beautiful woman to love another woman equally beautiful. In form and face I was called as handsome as she, although of a different type of beauty. But Helen's mind was beautiful. She was ever sunny and bright, ever brave and cheerful. Her qualities of character were far superior to all others I had ever met. She seemed to satisfy every longing of my soul, for I was always happy in her presence, and never weary of gazing upon her guileless face, never tired of listening to the music of her charming voice. She seemed a being made to love, and I ofttimes felt that life would not be worth living if Helen Greenwood should die. The future is wisely hidden from our view; if it were not so no one would ever be happy. I thought I was happy as it was possible for me to be in those days; yet there was a certain restlessness which I found I could not overcome, for the demon jealousy was ever whispering in my ear that Helen loved her brother better than she did me. Try as hard as I could to dispel the thought, I could not conquer my jealous nature.

One day, after Fred had been with her several weeks, I inquired when she expected him to return, and when she replied "Next week" I was delighted, for I would have her all to myself again. Something seemed taken out of my life while Fred was with her; so I resolved to remain from their home until after his departure. But Helen gave a farewell reception the evening before his

return, which I attended. I felt kindly toward everybody that evening. Mr. Greenwood was away from home, and I always thought that Helen felt much happier and more at ease when he was absent. We were all merry together, and seemed to forget that our charming hostess was a minister's wife. Helen was the gayest of us all; but I knew her heart was ready to break, thinking of the years that would come and go before she would see her heart's idol again. When she bade me "good-night" she made me promise to spend the following day with her. "My brother will go on the early train," she said, "and I shall be lonely."

She could not see my jealous, exacting nature, she was too divinely good, too sweet and gentle to see the faults of her friend. God never made another woman so good and true. I thought he never had made another like her.

The following day I was on hand to lunch with Helen. "Is it not cruel," she said, "that we must be so widely separated when we are so much to each other?" "Why did not your brother prolong his visit?" I inquired. "Oh, I urged him to, and at length, when I would not consent to his leaving me so soon, he confided a secret in my ear. Fred and his lovely wife are expecting a little stranger to their home next month. After which they will go to housekeeping." So a little stranger was coming to the home of Fred Garland. The news interested me exceedingly. I could not understand why my feelings were stirred so deeply. It seemed to me that something new and bright was about to enter my own life, and I began to question concerning Fred's wife. "What was she like?" "Were they a happy couple?" And such

other questions usually asked by one woman of another. Helen never grew weary talking about anything which concerned her brother, and she confided to me much of interest. I thought that it was extremely strange that such a change should be wrought in me by the expected advent of an unborn babe; but some subtle influence seemed to whisper to me that Fred Garland's child would affect my future so happily. In what way I could not imagine, unless it was that Helen would be its aunt, and her joys were mine. Helen said that Fred was devotedly fond of his wife. Previously I had not been interested in her, but now I was eager to learn all I could concerning her. "I have never seen Violette," said Helen, "but she sent word to me that I am to name the baby if a boy. I have already done so. If a boy he will have his father's name, and if a girl she is to be named Helen. Violette and Fred both desire a daughter, and I am hoping to have a namesake."

"I hope it may be a girl," I said, and a strange joy arose within my heart. I began to wonder if I was a lover of children; but I could not recall a single child that I had ever cared for particularly. Strange that I should anticipate the arrival of Fred and Violette Garland's with such satisfaction.

"Are you pleased with the thought of becoming an aunt, Helen?" "No, I am not glad, for children usually bring more sorrow than joy to those who give them birth. I never desire to become a mother, and I have hoped that none would be born to my brother." I heard this remark from Helen with amazement, for I had heard my father say that every true wife desired the joy and exaltation of motherhood.

When the twilight hour approached I returned to my home. Helen had invited me to remain and accompany her to the weekly prayer-meeting, but I did not feel in the mood. I seldom did, although I frequently attended for the sake of being with my friend. Life would not be worth much without Helen, I thought. Every material blessing which I desired my parents lavished upon me, yet these indulgences failed in making me happy. I felt alone in my own home. I did not understand my father and mother, neither did they understand me or each other. My life was chilled by neglect, although it was not a material neglect. We lived in luxury and elegance, yet an incessant gloom pervaded our home. There seemed to be a lone, impassable gulf between my father and mother, yet no unkind words ever fell from their lips. My father was ever kind and courteous, but never loving. My mother appeared sad and indifferent. I did not care for the glamour of society, but yearned for happiness in my home.

The following day was bright and beautiful; my mother suggested that we go out driving, much to my delight. My mother was usually apathetic, and preferred remaining indoors. She was very dull today, but I was happy with my own thoughts. After a long silence I abruptly asked, "Do you love children, mother?" I shall never forget the look of horror she gave me. "Has any one told you of my dislike for children?" she inquired in an icy voice. "No, indeed! But I was thinking how sweet it must be to have a baby to love and caress." "Great heaven, you are like your father!" she said, sarcastically. He adores children; he is insane over them; it has been a mania with him always; but I never

mistrusted until now that you had inherited his disposition." I grasped the truth, I yearned for a baby to love and caress. "And so you love children," my mother continued in a tone which implied I had lowered myself in her estimation. "Pray never mention the subject to me again," she exclaimed in a commanding voice. "You have an unnatural disposition, a strange combination: you are a man hater like myself; you love children like your father. Irma, tomorrow I will relate to you the sad, sad story of my life. You have always known there was a dark shadow hanging over your home. There is a deep mystery which I will explain to you on the morrow. Your father is ever cold and reserved with both of us, but I know he longs every day of his life to fold you in his arms. Although he hates me even as I hate him, he desires you and me to be happy together; but we never have been, Irma, and we never shall be. Your father does not realize the gulf between us, and refrains from showing you affection because he fears he might come between us." "I wish you did love me," I ventured to say. "I should love you if you were not his child," she exclaimed. She became so excited that her eyes blazed. "I will tell you all tomorrow," she said, and commanded the driver to hurry home as fast as possible. Neither of us spoke during the remainder of the ride, and we were both glad when we reached the house. I rushed to my room and threw myself upon the couch and wept bitterly. So I was "a strange combination." I knew it. My mother had declared that I was a man hater, and I verily believed that she was right. I was in the radiant morning of life, and not a few gentlemen seemed attractive to me; but I could not love any of them because I was a

man hater by inheritance, and I was like my mother, so she had herself affirmed. For one brief minute I wished I had never known my father or mother. I had no inclination for lunch that well-remembered day. I did not crave food, but my heart was hungry for sympathy. At the usual time, however, I softly and slowly wended my way to the dining-room. As I neared my mother's room I heard a sound of sobs and moans. I was about to enter when I heard my mother's voice, "I will tell her all tomorrow, not because I love her, but because I hate her. O God, keep me from a mad-house! I am insane! I must be insane to hate my own child as I hate Irma Wild. Thank God, I have something to calm me," she muttered. For a few minutes all was as still as the grave, then I fancied that I heard my mother's step approaching the door, so I hastened on.

My father was already seated at the table. He greeted me pleasantly, as he always did, but his face was careworn and sad. He inquired if I had enjoyed my morning ride. Then he rang for Fanny, my mother's maid, and asked if her mistress was coming to lunch. "No sir," was her reply. No further questions were asked, and we ate our meal in silence, as we had frequently done before. I thought of Helen Greenwood. Her home arose before my mental vision. There were no dark shadows there. I recalled her gentle manner, her winning ways, the love-light in her eyes as she gazed upon her brother; I recalled her childhood days, her devotion to Fred. How unlike they were: he was tall and dark, she petite and fair. Helen Greenwood, my sweet friend, was ever in my thoughts. She was frank and sincere at all times. I wished I could be the same; but there was no frankness

or sincerity in my home. I deplored the fact more than ever this afternoon. I looked across the table at my father. He seemed lost in revery. "What are you thinking about, father?" I abruptly inquired. My question seemed to startle him, and he answered instantly with a smile, "Helen Greenwood." Was it the power of mind over mind? I wondered. I would test him. "What were your thoughts concerning her?" Had he replied, "I think that she is divine, the most lovely being God ever called into existence," I should not have been surprised. But he did not answer: he turned as white as the damask that covered the table; his hands, even, were pale; he tried to smile, but it was a ghastly attempt. I gazed with astonishment on his face. What had caused this sudden agitation? A great feeling of pity arose within my heart for my father. He was very unhappy I saw plainly; but I could not imagine why he changed color when he mentioned Helen, for I did not believe he had been thinking of her, but that he said so playfully, knowing my fondness for my friend. I fancied he wished to conceal his real thoughts, and I wondered what they could be to cause such pallor and agitation. Could I have read his mind I should have known that it was not the power of telepathy which controlled his thoughts. Had the curtain lifted what a revelation it would have been! I tried to solve the problem. Had my mother told him that she was to relate the story of her life to me on the morrow? Poor, unhappy man. It was evident that he had no one to love him. Again my mind reverted to Helen. She would have loved him were she in my place, she had such tact to manage people. If her father and mother had lived, and had been at swords' points, in her gentle,

Christ-like way she would have reconciled them. I had never tried to make my home happy. But I remembered that once the awful thought came to me that I should have been much happier if my parents had been lost at sea as Helen's had been. For a wailing storm was ever raging in our home. Although the tempest was unseen, its terror and its impending gloom were continually felt. I had sometimes seen my mother's form reel to and fro as though the cold waves were about to carry her overboard. I had heard of "the Dove of Peace." I had read in the Bible how Christ once stilled the tempest. But I had never prayed that the "Dove of Peace" might enter our home; I had never asked Christ to say "Peace be still" to the troubled waters of our home life; I had ever felt neglected and forsaken and had turned to Helen for love and sympathy. I had always found my solace in her. Today a feeling of depression came over me because my heart was stirred by the thought that I might have tried to bring about a condition of peace and harmony. I would wait until tomorrow, until I had heard the story of my mother's life, the secret of her sorrow, and then I should be able to judge if there was any chance for happiness in our home. My father did not taste another morsel of food, and soon asked to be excused. His manner was most singular. It must be that he knew what awaited me on the morrow. Why did my mother hate my father so bitterly that she could not endure me? Had he ever been guilty of a crime? He was so intellectual and dignified I could not believe he had ever deeply sinned. I did not believe he had even been unfaithful. When I went up to my room I was tempted to look in upon my mother, but Fanny came quietly out

and closed the door. "How is my mother?" I asked. "She is asleep," was the reply. "Asleep!" How could she sleep when under such intense excitement, I wondered, but I said nothing. And so my mother was sleeping! I almost wished that I might fall asleep and never awaken until there was joy in our home. I had rather cease living than continue to breathe the poisonous atmosphere of an inharmonious home. I had not learned how to bring truth and love into my daily life, nor did I know how soon Divine Love would lead me "beside the still waters." The Impersonal Christ was near at hand to uplift and save; but I did not realize it, and was looking into the future with my heart filled with fear and dark forebodings. I seldom saw my father and mother together except at our daily meals, and then they were so cold and distant I was always glad when each meal was over. "When my mother should lift the curtain of the past should I hate my father?" "Were they ever lovers?" Such questions forced themselves upon me, and I could not answer. I must await patiently my mother's story. God pity the child who is not loved into life.

CHAPTER II

A Noble Purpose

I REMAINED in my room that afternoon, cheerless and dejected. I reproached myself bitterly. I must do something that the storm clouds might be dispelled and love's sunshine be restored in their place. Oh why did my mother hate me? Was it possible for me to win her love? I was sure that I had only to love my father to know his affection. I wondered why I did not love him, who had been so kind in his guardianship. Why did my mother say I was a man hater? No man had ever treated me unkindly; through her tuition only had I learned to question man's sincerity. My mother had informed me that I was like her in that respect. But my mother had married, and I had always felt that I could never be induced to marry. I had wooers, much to my disgust, and they soon realized the fact that I knew not the meaning of the word love, in regard to man, and I did not believe I ever should.

We dined at seven, and I almost dreaded to go down to dinner; but I dressed myself as carefully as though we were expecting company. I would begin now to do my best to be attractive and agreeable to my parents. I forced a smile to my lips as I glided down stairs. I would appear gay and happy, although my heart was exceedingly distressed.

I found my father and mother waiting to receive me.

I noticed how fine they were looking. My father had a few silver threads among the brown in his hair; but my mother showed no sign of age. Why could not my father and mother be happy together? I wondered. Alas I knew not the bitterness of the past. How graceful my mother appeared as she presided at the table. There was no trace of nervousness visible. I should judge from her appearance that she had never known a sorrow. What had wrought the change since I heard her rave in her room? She had a far-away expression in her eyes, which I had frequently noticed there. Tonight she had a madonna face, it was so quiet and peaceful. Yet I had heard her declare that she hated me, her only child. I was very chatty during the meal, and my parents smiled upon me. After dinner was over I lingered in the dining-room until my father went into the library. I entered the parlor and opened the piano for the first time in many weeks, and played several pieces; but I could not sing, my heart was too heavy. My mother came in and seated herself in her favorite chair with a strange smile upon her face. I was delighted to know that she was listening to me, and I played on and on, hoping that she enjoyed the music. I grew weary at last and closed the piano as the clock was striking ten. I turned to my mother and said "Good night." But she did not respond. In a louder tone I repeated the words, "Good night, mother," but she did not reply. Could it be that she did not hear? I hurried to her side and found her in a deep sleep. I feared that she was ill, and called Fanny, who came at once but did not appear at all surprised. "She did not have her nap out, I presume," was all the comment she made. And taking mother in her strong arms she carried

her from the room. Yet she did not awaken. I followed them along. "Is my mother ill?" I exclaimed.

"Oh, no, she took an overdose, I think."

"An overdose of what?"

"Of medicine; it is something she takes for her nerves. I have seen her in like condition frequently; I shall remain by her side during the night, so you need not worry, Miss Wild. I know just what to do for her. The doctor has explained it to me."

"Did she ever take an overdose of medicine before?" I inquired, with a sinking heart.

"Oh yes, ma'am, several times I have been obliged to stand over her all night long and administer ammonia, smelling salts, and other restoratives."

"Why does the doctor give her such dangerous medicines?" I asked.

"She acquired the habit long years ago," replied Fanny.

"Acquired the habit? Has my mother formed some habit of which I never knew?" I asked myself. My mother's room was soon reached, and Fanny quickly disrobed her. I tarried there, for my mother seemed to be paralyzed. I could not leave her thus. After she was put in bed, and her elegant clothing hung in the wardrobe, Fanny went to a little drawer in a small cabinet which stood in one corner of the room, and brought forth a tiny bottle containing a white powder. I turned it around to read the label, and the word *morphine* met my startled vision. With a trembling hand I gave it back in silence. So my mother was a morphine victim! I went to my room sick at heart. I had heard of morphine, and I knew it was a dangerous drug. My own mother was a

slave to the habit. How revolting! How sinful it appeared to me my reader may imagine. Words were inadequate to paint the faintness and the chill which overwhelmed my heart.

The following morning, as I looked out at the early sunrise flooding the rosy sky, I experienced a stifling sensation, as though some mighty weight of sorrow had suddenly fallen upon me to crush out my life. Such a terrible foreboding! A bright day had dawned, but there would be only gloom in it for me. Happiness was gone forever, I thought. My poor unfortunate mother's condition due to the habit contracted by the use of that terrible drug blighted and chilled me. I could not conceive what it all meant. Must I conceal this wretched fact from the world? Did my father know of it, I wondered. I was very sorrowful; but at length Hope, which never quite deserts us, inspired me. Perhaps I could induce my mother to abandon the drug, but I had many misgivings; I feared that I could exert no influence over her, yet I firmly resolved that I would try. A gloom overshadowed my soul. Youth, love, and hope had seemed to be buried in one wide, deep grave. But for the first time in my life I now felt that I had something to live for, something to achieve, and a burden to bear. At last a great and good motive stirred my heart: I would reclaim my mother.

I heard a gentle tap at the door. "Come in," I said, and my mother's maid entered. "Oh, my dear Miss Wild," she exclaimed, in a frightened voice, "please do not let your mother know that I revealed her secret to you last night. It was very wrong for me to do so, I know. She has just awakened and has been asking me

questions. She remembers that you were playing in the parlor when she fell asleep, and asked me if you mistrusted what was the matter with her. I told her I did not think you did. She has been crying bitterly, and she has made me solemnly promise never to tell you. My heart smote me, remembering I had already done so; but I took an oath that I would never tell. Oh, Miss Wild, why did I tell you?"

"You did not tell me anything," I said. "You simply handed me the bottle and I saw for myself. I shall not mention the matter to mother, as it would grieve her; and I beseech you not to acquaint another person with my mother's secret, for you are and have been for many years her confidante."

"I would not have shown anyone but you, her own daughter, the morphine."

"Does not my father know she uses a drug?" "Oh, yes, he has known for several years. The doctor told him one night when he thought she could not live until morning."

"But my mother desired that I be kept in ignorance?"

"She did not wish me to tell you," said Fanny. "She said she had promised to have an interview with you today, but she asked me to beg of you to wait just one day more. 'Tell Miss Wild that I am ill, but request her not to come to me, as I do not wish to see any one today.'"

"Give my love to my mother, and tell her that I am glad she does not wish to see me, for I am also ill and do not wish to be disturbed."

"Can I do anything for you, Miss Wild?"

"No, my trouble is mental. A change of thought would do me good, I think."

Fanny disappeared with a look of sadness clearly depicted on her face, revealing to me that I had in her a soul of kindred sympathy.

I felt that I could not remain alone during the day. I hurriedly dressed myself and hastened to the home of Helen. It was their prayer time, and I entered noiselessly the adjoining room. I heard Mr. Greenwood pray for their dear friends who were out of the ark of safety. "Be merciful to our young friend who is so determined to lead a life of pleasure. Oh, may she turn to Thee before it is too late. Convict and convert her before her heart becomes hardened in unbelief. Oh, save her for Christ's sake, and turn her from the world unto Thee." I knew he meant me; but his prayer did not make much impression upon me. I wondered if I had been determined to lead a life of pleasure. I did not believe he really understood the heart of the person he was praying for. Helen's gentle "Amen" at the close of the prayer sounded like a holy benediction. There was a little sob in it. I wondered if she was always moved to tears when her husband prayed for me. It was because she loved me; I did not think she worried about my lost condition, I was sure that I did not. They sang that beautiful hymn, "Sing them over again to me, — wonderful words of life."

After the hymn was ended Helen glided out, and much to her astonishment found me. "Speak of angels and you hear the rustle of their wings," I said gayly. But Helen was sad. "We have heard from my brother's wife," she said. "The baby came sooner than was expected; my brother had not reached home. The telegram was sent to him here. It read, 'Come at once, you have a

daughter, wife is very ill.' Come to my room, Irma," she sighed, placing her hand upon her heart. "I am not feeling well today, my heart is beating heavily and I think I will be obliged to lie down." As soon as we entered her room she flung herself upon the couch. "I thought of my dear brother all night long," she said. "Just before daybreak I seemed to slumber a little, and I had a vision, Irma; I feel certain that my brother's wife is going to die. Oh, it will kill Fred to lose his sweet Violette."

"What did you dream, Helen?"

"Oh I cannot believe it was simply a dream. I saw as in a vision a beautiful casket the color of peach blossoms and covered with fragrant Easter lilies, and I heard a voice say, 'Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.' I looked to see from whence the voice came; but no one was in sight. I thought it must be the voice of an angel, for it was not like a human voice. The room was very dimly lighted, yet all objects were familiar to me; it was my own parlor. This fact makes me feel I must have been partly asleep, for things are always so mixed in dreams, but the beautiful casket and its silent occupant was more than a dream. I tried to reach it, but an invisible power seemed to hold me so I could not move. The stillness was oppressive. At length a woman entered the room. She was a little past the meridian of life I should judge from her appearance, for her luxuriant hair was slightly streaked with silver and her face was the grandest I ever looked upon. A woman born to command. She approached the casket and bending over it kissed the face of the dead, then unclasped a tiny locket from a chain she wore around her neck and concealed it somewhere within the casket and, as she talked to the

dead, her voice was very low but painfully distinct. 'My child, my child,' she murmured, 'thou art beautiful even in death. Oh child of my love! would that I could have died for thee, sweet one! Sweet one! Little, sweet love of my heart! Would that I could wrest thee from the grasp of Death and kiss thy sweet face in health's ruddy glow. Do you from the unseen world look down in pity upon your poor mother?' Then she stood erect, and raised her eyes to Heaven. 'Oh my God!' she murmured. 'Why did I consent to part from my child? She was life of my life, and soul of my soul. God help me to bear this heavy burden.' Again she bent her stately form over the beautiful casket and exclaimed, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear!' 'My child, forgive me,' she moaned, as though she had been guilty of a great crime, and was filled with remorse. The agony upon her face was intense, but I shall always love the memory of that sublime countenance, for I never saw a picture or painting which equaled it."

"And do you think that it was Violette's casket?"

"I certainly do, for after this majestic figure had vanished, the door again opened and my brother entered. I could not look upon his anguish; it affected me differently from the woman's. His entire face was swollen and red from weeping, and the veins in his forehead looked as though they would burst. I managed to scream, 'Fred!' And the casket slowly faded from my vision; but the odor of the lilies remained, and I heard a voice saying, 'I am the resurrection and the life'; and there was music, soft and low, and singing far away in the distance. At first I could not hear the words, but seemed to be mysteriously carried to where it was, and I heard the

voices of children singing, 'Nearer, my God, to Thee.' Yes, Irma, I am prepared to hear of the death of my sister-in-law."

"And do you think that the woman whom you saw was her mother?"

"I feel that it must be."

"Did Fred ever mention that his mother-in-law was such a radiant being as you beheld in your dream?"

"No, he hardly mentioned Violette's mother."

"Oh Helen, it was no vision," I said, "it was a strange, fantastic dream, caused from worrying over your brother's telegram. You say that the woman made this remark, 'Why did I ever consent to part from my child,' and you have told me that Fred's mother-in-law has never parted from Violette."

"But she had consented that they might leave her for a home of their own when the baby came," said Helen.

We sat in silence a few minutes, and I knew that Helen was brooding over the vision, as she termed it. At length she said, "When I write to Fred I shall ask him to send me a picture of his wife's mother, for I long to look upon that wonderful face again."

"I should send for a picture; it would convince you that it was not a vision."

"Irma, I have had a great many dreams during my life, but the experience I had last night, or rather this morning, was more than an ordinary dream. The casket was a vision, and the woman who leaned over it to caress her dead, still lives, or has lived some time, somewhere. My heart went out to her as though she were my own mother, and I tried to speak but I could not. I wanted to cry, 'Come to me, I live,' but I was dumb until I saw

Fred in his agony."

"In your dream did you not long to look into the casket yourself?"

"Yes, but I could not move."

"We cannot account for dreams, dear Helen, but yours certainly cannot come true, for if your brother's wife should die her casket will not be placed in your parlor."

"I had thought of that, myself," said Helen. "My vision may not come true in every particular; but the pink casket covered with fragrant Easter lilies was prophetic. I felt sure it was an omen of death, when I became conscious."

"Did you ever see anyone whom the woman resembled?"

"It seems to me I have, but I cannot say who it is. She was tall and well proportioned; her hair was dark and wavy like your own; but, as I told you, it was streaked with gray. Irma, she looked something as you might look a quarter of a century from now should you never know sin, sickness, or sorrow during that time."

"But I understood you her face was convulsed with agony."

"In sorrow for her dead it was; but her previous life must have been calm and beautiful, for her face was sweet even in her anguish. I saw a tiny spot of red in her forehead as though she had dipped the end of her finger in blood and had imprinted it there, and when she leaned over the casket and pressed her face to the dead it showed very plainly, but it was so small it did not disfigure her in the least. I thought of 'The Scarlet Letter,' but this mark did not form a letter."

"It seems very strange to me, Helen, that you should attach so much importance to a dream." A celestial look came over her face, and she appeared lost in thought. I felt as if she did not care to converse and for a long time we were silent, as we frequently were when we were together. We never felt obliged to entertain one another. We were like two loving sisters together, each happy and contented to know that all was well with the other.

Helen felt much better in body and mind in the afternoon. Some of her husband's parishioners called and she put away her own feelings and entered into sympathy with them. All the congregation loved her, and well they might, for her great heart was an unfailing fountain of love and consolation, ever yielding solace and refreshment to the afflicted and imparting a hallowed sweetness and sunshine to the commonest joys.

I remained with her all day, not returning to my home until quite late in the evening. "Home is where the heart is," I thought, while on my way to our elegant residence at the Back Bay. I entered unseen. My room had been taken care of in my absence and there was a beautiful bouquet of roses on my table. My father frequently remembered me in this way, but I felt that no one had missed me or even wondered where I was. I was far from happy, although surrounded by luxury and favored with youth and health; but I lacked "The peace of mind which passeth all understanding, that peace which the world cannot give, neither can it take away." I yearned for the sweet peace which Helen Greenwood possessed. I was sure something was lacking in my heart, but I did not know what it was. Why was Helen so satisfied while I was so dissatisfied? What did she

know that I did not know? Helen lived her beautiful life, which seemed to be in a vastly different and higher realm of thought from that which I had known. Her gentle influence drew me to her closer and closer as time passed on. To me the divinity of her soul seemed at times to be poised on the great crystal mountain of perfection; but she betrayed no self-consciousness of her spiritual exaltation and much less did she see the faults of others. Neither did she seem to think evil of anyone. My last thought as I sought my bed was of Helen.

CHAPTER III

The Secret

THE following morning I awoke with a ray of sunshine in my heart. I had dreamed of a sweet baby girl, who folded her little dimpled arms around my neck and kissed me. The little clinging stranger was pure as snow, and my heart went out to her in love. My dream was pleasanter by far than Helen's had been, I said to myself; it was merely a dream, but I could not rid myself of the impression that it was Fred and Violette Garland's child who had loved me so fondly.

The beauty of childhood appealed to me as never before, and I recalled the inspired words of the great child-lover, Dickens: "How can we help loving the children, for they are fresh from God."

> "They are idols of hearts and of households;
> They are angels of God in disguise;
> His sunlight still sleeps in their tresses,
> His glory still gleams in their eyes;
> Oh! those truants from home and from Heaven,
> They have made me more manly and mild.
> And I know how Jesus could liken
> The kingdom of God to a child."

Then came the thought of Him who had most truly loved the little ones, He was born a babe and when He

grew to manhood had taught His disciples that all must become like little children in order to enter heaven. I must learn to love and trust like a little child, for God must be good!

I ordered breakfast served in my room. Fanny informed me that my mother was anxious to see me as soon as possible. And the announcement stirred my heart to a discord.

"In one half hour I will be with her," I said. I dressed myself entirely in black, for I felt gloomy and desired my clothing to harmonize with my feelings. I was proud and cold. The bright hopeful thoughts I had entertained on recalling my dream had passed away because of the estrangement between us, and a repellant feeling passed over me. All the pity, all the tender emotions I felt the day previous were wanting. I would listen to her story, but the noble resolves which I had cherished to placate my mother seemed hopeless. Why do we sometimes listen to the still small voice, and at other times refuse to hear? When I entered my mother's room she had the same dreamy distant expression in her eyes which I had noted so frequently and understood so well now. I knew she was under control of the white powder in the little glass bottle. In striking contrast to myself, my mother wore a white silk negligée gown; it was no whiter than her face, and her eyes had the greenish light I had noticed the day before. She rose as I entered the room and approaching the door turned the key and placed it in her bosom. I felt a chilling sensation. Was it safe to be alone with her who had no affection for me and whose distraught mind was possibly laboring under some hallucination? I glanced out of the window to measure the

distance to the ground. She seemed to divine my thoughts, "I shall not harm you," she said, gently, "do not fear me, I would not harm my child. You would only need to touch the electric bell to summon help. I removed the key fearing you might not be willing to remain and listen to the whole dismal story I have to relate. I want you to hear me to the bitter end. When I have finished I will unlock the door and I know you will not create a scene by endeavoring to go before I do."

"Mother, I came here to listen to all you have to tell me, but I will not remain unless you replace the key in the door," I said firmly. She replaced it, and a deep silence fell between us. The little French clock upon the mantel calmly ticking the minutes away was the only sound I heard for twenty minutes. My mother's eyes were closed and I half feared she would go to sleep without unburdening her mind. At length she opened her eyes and spoke, and this is her story as nearly as I can repeat it, and I think it is correct, as each word seemed to become branded upon my mind as they fell one by one from her pallid lips:

"I was a simple country maiden, born and bred in Vermont, as you know, upon a grand old farm but a short distance from the Green Mountains. I was the youngest of twelve children and was called by all our friends and relatives 'the flower of the family.' I was strong and healthy and hardly knew the meaning of the word disease. I was as happy as the birds that sang so joyously in the dear old mountain trees around our home, and as free from care as the larks that wing their way to the bending sky, till I met your father. Yes, my daily life was a round of joy and innocent pleasure until he

came to our mountain home. I was loved and petted by my parents, brothers and sisters. 'Baby' was the pet name bestowed upon me. They all made a baby of me, and I accepted the indulgence as my natural heritage. Oh those happy, happy days when I knew not a sorrow. My parents had struggled all their lives to gain a footing in the world when the farm which we loved so well was mortgaged. First one scheme and then another was ventured upon to relieve the stress of circumstances. But none of them proved a success. My father had no business tact, but he was a very hard-working man and managed to obtain a living from the farm. By nature my mother was a very ambitious woman, and worried constantly over the fact that not a single dollar was laid by for a rainy day. She was almost weary of life when I came an unwelcome visitor to their home. She was never fond of children, and to become the mother of twelve exasperated her beyond measure, but she grew to love me more than she did any of the others, she frequently told me. Three sisters and four brothers had married and settled near home, and they all seemed happy and contented, although they were common, working people; poor, I suppose the world would term them, yet as I knew them they were rich in love and health, the best gifts bestowed upon mortals. Frequently my mother would declare she hated poverty. We had many of the comforts of life and I could not feel that we were poverty stricken, but my poor mother assured me that we were.

"'Bernice, never marry a poor man. Remain single unless you can marry a rich one. Remember what I say, Bernice.' Such was the advice she gave me over and over again after I grew to womanhood. I realized not the

meaning of the word wealth, but my mother endeavored to teach me its meaning. She would say, 'Money will bring happiness, it will bring power and friends. You have beauty, Bernice, do not throw it away upon a poor man, promise me that you will not.' And after becoming impressed with the significance of her words, I replied,

"'Mother, I never expect to have an opportunity of marrying a wealthy gentleman, but I will gladly promise what you wish.' Soon after making this foolish promise, my father suggested that we take a few city boarders. It was another plan to make money.

"'Do I not work hard enough already?' my mother asked.

"'Of course you do, wife, you work too hard, but I could hire a girl to help in the kitchen, and Bernice would assist in waiting on the city chaps.'

"'I will not!' I exclaimed. 'City chaps will never be waited upon by me. Possibly, though, I might manage to make myself so agreeable that they would be willing to wait upon me.' My mother gazed at me fondly, I was the apple of her eye, the joy of her heart, the inspiration of all her ambition. 'Baby,' she exclaimed, with love in her voice, 'I wish such a thing might really happen. Do not forget your promise, Bernice, to marry rich.' 'If I can,' I laughingly replied.

"'No matter if you do not love the man,' interrupted my father.

"'Do not worry about that, Pa, I could love a rich man easily enough. The fact that he was rich would make me love him. However I do not expect to be as fortunate as mother hopes that I may be, but if I cannot marry for wealth, I will not follow in the footsteps of

famous Maud Muller. Care and sorrow and motherhood shall never leave traces on my heart and brain.' 'You're right!' said my mother with spirit, and putting her arms around me she kissed me fondly.

"'You have false views of life,' declared my father, but his opinion was lost on me.

"A mother's influence is usually stronger than a father's. It is everlasting, ever powerful for good or evil. No one realizes that fact more than I do. Oh, Irma, how happy I might have been today if my poor work-weary mother had not taught me in her blind ignorance that money would bring happiness. I loved my mountain home surrounded by its stately trees. Ofttimes in memory I see them lifting their outstretched arms to the sun. I used to love the country walks in my native town. I never was so happy as when in the country walking along grass-grown lanes, in the early morning, when the dew was on the grass and the air melodious with the songs of birds. Life writes its history upon the human face, and the faces in the country are far more beautiful to me than those to be found in the city. I loved nature; I was not weak or sentimental; I had never read romances when I met your father. I knew that my mother had ever been obliged to toil from early morn till late at night. Cooking, washing, baking, broiling, was her daily employment. I pitied her, for I confess I disliked the drudgery of housework more than anything else. I loved to ride, and fish, and hunt, and work in the flower gardens. I loved the liberty of untrammeled nature and to live care free. I had girl friends and boy acquaintances, but none of the latter for whom I cared beyond the companionship they gave me in innocent romp. I had never

had a lover and I did not desire one.

"The idea of taking summer boarders seemed to strike me agreeably, and I thought we might realize a good deal of profit thereby. For the first time I entered into my father's plans with my whole heart. He inserted a glowing advertisement in a Boston paper, and among the first to apply for board was your father and his cousin Charles Wild. There was a striking contrast between George and his cousin Charles. The latter was the picture of health; strong and well, with ruddy cheeks and brown hair and eyes. Your father was 'under the weather' as he expressed it. He had come to the mountains to seek health, and his cousin had come to keep him company and have a good time generally. Oh, Irma, how I wish I had been left alone, to live along one day at a time in communion with Nature. Had my mother taught me differently I am sure that I should have learned to 'look through Nature up to Nature's God.' For I felt in harmony with everything that lived. The insect at my foot, the birds which chirruped in the bushes, the flowers that so generously yielded me their sweet fragrance and the trees that so often wooed me to slumber with their soothing lullabies. I was chaste as the violet, at that time, and as unpretentious, aside from my insane desire to secure a rich husband, and that thought would never have occurred to me had not my mother instilled it into my young mind and impressed it upon me from childhood to womanhood. Irma, the past is broken and stained because I was not taught that goodness is more than gold, and character outweighs culture."

"Why have you never spoken thus to me before, Mother?"

"By intuition you have led a life of purity and beauty," she replied, "and I have ofttimes felt my daughter was capable of teaching me."

"An inharmonious home is not calculated to make my life beautiful," I said. Fixing her eyes on me with a sudden steely glitter, she resumed her narration in a changed voice. Her goodness was no longer paramount; the drug she had taken made her exceedingly changeable in her emotions.

"When my father introduced me to George and Charles Wild," she continued, "I knew at once that they were 'well to do.' 'They have money to burn,' said my mother when we were alone.

"I wondered if either of them would care for me. I was not conceited in my ambition and I did not believe that they would. Charles Wild soon manifested his utter indifference. He hardly noticed me at all; but his cousin seemed lost in amazement at my physical strength. Born and bred in Boston, he was not used to Vermont girls. He was not in his normal condition of health and when he found a girl of eighteen summers who could outdo him in strength he was greatly surprised. I was like a young Amazon, so strong and fearless. After a couple of weeks Charles Wild returned to Boston.

"'I will leave my cousin in your care, Miss Duhammell,' he said with a smile when he went away. 'I will come and go home with you, George. Good-bye, old boy, good-bye, Miss Duhammell,' were his cheerful parting words and he was gone. I was sorry, for he was so gay I felt that I should miss him exceedingly.

"Your father and I rowed together upon the river, climbed the mountains, fished and hunted and were good

comrades.

"My mother showed all too plainly that she was delighted with the course events were taking. She purchased me some dainty summer gowns, and I understood her meaning. 'Capture a wealthy husband if possible,' she whispered in my ear one evening. 'It is impossible,' I replied, laughing.

"Yes, George Wild and I were good friends from the first, and although he did not flatter me, I saw plainly that he admired my physical strength and beauty. He never loved me, and, in a way I was unworthy of his love. After all these years, I marvel that I did not fall down and worship him. But I was a simple child, and I was not capable of appreciating his worth. My mental powers had never been cultivated. I graduated from the Green Mountain academy, but I cared very little for an education at that time. To be always happy was my ambition. Never to be obliged to toil as my mother did, and never have the care of children, to possess riches, and enjoy luxury, would bring me happiness I verily believed."

"Might not one have an abundance of wealth and be happy?" I asked. "It is not possible that God wishes us to be poor, for we need money."

"I do not know what God wants," she said. "Do not ask me difficult questions, Irma. With all my wealth I am unhappy."

"And so am I," I replied, "but I do not believe it is because we possess wealth."

She looked annoyed as she continued her story. "All men are conceited, and I think that your father feared I might learn to love him. One day he was looking pale and sad, and I inquired if he was not feeling well. 'I

have been ill for two years,' he said. 'And for the last year life has been a burden to me. My health became impaired during my senior year at college, and I am as well today as usual; in fact I feel my health is somewhat improved since I came to your Green Mountain home. I am thinking of those I love, this morning. I am yearning for the dear ones whom I shall never see again on earth, Miss Duhammell. Do you know that men always love dead women better than they do living ones?'

"'Do you love a dead woman?' I asked.

"'Yes, I do, and I had never told her of my love. Death wooed her before I had ventured so far. Some day I had hoped to make her my bride, but Death claimed her as his, ere I had the courage to declare my sincere love and devotion. The sweetest bride I ever looked upon was my friend, Amy Thurber, clasped in the icy arms of Death. I was only a boy, nineteen years old, still in school, when I first learned to love her. If she knew my secret I cannot say. She was seven years my senior, had she been twenty it would have made no difference to me. She passed away very suddenly of heart failure. I could not realize that she was gone never to return. Miss Duhammell, when I buried Amy I wished that I too might cease to live, for she was my boyish hope and idol. My mother died just a year before Amy did; had they lived my life would have been such that no man could reproach me. I shall never cease to regret that I did not tell her of my adoration. When they told me that she was dead I seemed to suddenly grow old. The light faded out of the sky and left the world as dark and dismal for me as Amy's grave. Everything in nature seemed to mock me. The singing of the birds, and the sighing of

the wind drove me frantic. The doctor said that I had nervous prostration, but I knew it was a broken heart.'

"My father came out on the veranda just then and interrupted our conversation, much to my annoyance. After this confidential talk my companion seemed much freer with me than he had heretofore, for he felt he had imparted to me his secret woe. Haying time came round and we enjoyed it together. 'It is the first time I was ever in the country during haying,' said he one day, 'but it will not be the last. I shall come next summer during haying time, Bernice.' He had gained my permission to call me by my first name.

"The weeks glided into months, and he still lingered with us, spending his money as freely as he drank the water from the 'old oaken bucket which hung in the well' on our farm. We had modern means of obtaining water, but the 'old oaken bucket' we retained as a souvenir of the past.

"Yes, our scheme for making money had succeeded at last. We had several boarders, but none so generous as Mr. Wild. 'We shall soon be able to clear off the mortgage,' said my father to me one day, 'and we have to thank you for keeping Mr. Wild with us so long, Bernice.' I never had seen my mother so happy. Everything seemed to run smoothly. My mother is right, money will work wonders, I thought.

"One day Mr. Wild showed me Amy Thurber's picture. 'She was not handsome,' I said, after studying it some time.

"'Oh no, but sweet and winsome,' he replied.

"'So you will never marry,' I timidly remarked.

"'Most certainly I shall marry. It is the chief desire

of my heart to have a home and children. My dear mother was passionately fond of children, and grieved because I was her only child. I hope you will marry while you are young, George, and that I shall be grandmother to at least a dozen, she once said. She did not know of my love for Amy, I never mentioned it to anyone but cousin Charles, until I made a confidante of you. The other morning, when I confided in you, I craved sympathy. I am sure you are sorry for me, Bernice, are you not?'

"'No, I do not feel sorry for you, the world is full of beautiful women, and I cannot understand why you should mourn all your life for a dead woman!'

"'Bernice, you have never loved!'

"'No! I have not! Love is a mystery to me, a sealed book, I do not believe that I shall ever love.'

"'So you have decided to be an old maid?'

"'Oh no. I intend to marry for a home and for support. I shall marry for money.'

"'And I intend to marry because I desire children. Whose motive is the higher, do you think, yours or mine, Bernice?'

"'It would be hard to decide,' I said. 'I would marry for gold, you for posterity. I presume your motive is the nobler. I know that you are a good man, I hope you may choose a good wife.'

"'I hope she may be strong and well, physically and mentally!' he exclaimed with a good deal of emotion, and then turning and looking at me with deep interest, as though some sudden thought had occurred to him, and as though he was taking a mental photograph, or was weighing me in a balance. I silently waited for him to speak,

and was surprised and startled when he sat down and cried like a woman.

"'Mr. Wild, are you crying for Amy?' I inquired with sympathetic tenderness.

"'Yes, for Amy, and my own dear mother, and for everything bright and beautiful which has gone out of my life never to return again to bless and cheer me. I have cherished dreams of fame and power, but my health failed me, and all my noble ambitions vanished. A little peace and domestic love is all that I ever expect.'

"'But you have wealth at your command.'

"'It is true, but I am alone in the world, no one looks to me for happiness. I sometimes wish that cousin Charlie were poor that I might spend a portion of my wealth on him; but he also has fortune, and next month is to marry Madelaine Dale, a beautiful heiress. Bernice, would you be willing to marry me, knowing that I can never love again?'

"'Mr. Wild, would you be willing to marry me, knowing that I can never love you?'

"'Do you not think that you could learn to love me, Bernice?'

"'I should not try, knowing that you had no affection to bestow on me.'

"'So you will not marry me?'

"'Oh yes, Mr. Wild, I will marry you if you really desire it, but you know my object will be mercenary.'

"'I understand,' he said, 'and I am delighted to find you sincere and truthful. I think you will never deceive me.'

"'I never will! We shall understand each other and can live very pleasantly together I trust and believe un-

less I lose my health, and you lose your wealth,' I said, laughingly. 'I am naturally of a jealous nature; but I am certain that I shall never be jealous of a dead woman, but should you fall in love with any living one but your wife I should rebel and hold you in contempt.'

"'You confess you do not love me,' he said; 'supposing you should some time meet one whom you did love, what would be my fate?'

"'I will be true,' I replied.

"Thus we were betrothed. He did not even kiss me. But he placed his hand upon my head and blessed me, and offered up a little prayer to God for our happiness.

"'I will be true to you, Bernice, so help me God!' he said. At that time, when he plighted his fidelity, he was conscious of his weakness; knowing that he did not love me, he feared temptation might assail him, and hoped the oath would strengthen him to be true.

"Irma, my child, always remember that man is an enigma. I hope that you will never marry."

"Whether I do or not you will never love me, Mother!" I said, and burst into violent weeping.

"Oh, Irma, you little realize all you are to me. I love you fondly, my child, my only one!"

I could hardly believe in her avowal of affection when I remembered what I had heard her say concerning me.

"I cannot tell you any more today, Irma. My head is aching fearfully. I will tell you the rest tomorrow; come to me at ten o'clock tomorrow morning and I will finish my sad tale of woe and disappointment. Put your arms around me and kiss me as you used to when you were a little child, and love me, Irma; with all my faults I beg of you to love me. Promise me that I shall never be

buried alive."

Could I kiss my mother? Could I twine my arms around her neck? I did not have to decide, she forgot her request in her eagerness to obtain her medicine.

"Go! Go at once! Irma, I must take my medicine immediately, I am very nervous." Her face was ashen, and she was trembling like a leaf. "Call Fanny, Irma, and if I never see you again, good-bye."

I hurried from the room and sent Fanny to my mother whose mind had become shattered as soon as the effect of the morphine had worn away. I went to the piano and while I was playing, to calm my nerves, I heard the door-bell, and a maid brought me Helen's card, with Helen following closely.

"How depressed you look, Irma, are you in sorrow?" she inquired. I could not reply but burst into tears. She opened her arms and I ran into them and sobbed until her soothing voice restored my self poise.

Her tender solicitude and sweet sympathy brought peace to my excited nerves without seeking the cause, and when she left me I was feeling much happier, for the consolation she imparted had the same power to uplift as it had when Christ uttered it on the shore of Galilee, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

CHAPTER IV

The Higher Power

WHEN I left my mother she was like one demented, weak and childish. My mother is ruined by morphine and not responsible for what she does, I mentally declared. My better and clearer conception of duty returned, and I resolved that I would save her from herself, and the deadly drug. Alas! How little I comprehended the power of the fearful habit to which she was addicted. I had hoped that she would relate more of her history, especially in reference to the contracted habit for the drug. I had promised Fanny I would not mention it, so I was determined to lead my mother if possible to speak of it of her own accord. Meanwhile I would consult our family physician and see what help he could render me. I felt that it was simply a habit, and if I could influence my mother to abandon it all would be well. "Oh, God! help me to save my poor mother!" was the first fervent prayer I had offered for many a year.

Neither my father nor mother appeared at luncheon, and I ate alone, which was not an unusual event. I ate but a few mouthfuls, then ordered the carriage and was driven to the office of Dr. Fuller, our family physician. Fortunately I found him alone. Minutes seemed like years, I was so anxious to know what course to pursue to redeem my poor mother. Dr. Fuller had proved himself

to be a good, true friend; he had treated me for all the diseases incident to childhood; aside from these I never had known sickness. Hardly a week had passed since I could remember that he had not been to our house, and always as a welcome guest, for my mother's face lighted with joy whenever she saw his carriage approaching. Now that I was seated opposite his kindly and familiar face I hardly knew where to begin. The blood rushed to my cheeks, and the tears started from my eyes in spite of myself.

"Well, dear, are you ill?" he asked. "No, Dr. Fuller, I am not ill. I came to see you in regard to my mother." "Is she worse?" he inquired in alarm. "Not that I know of; I came for information and advice. What is the matter with my mother?"

"Miss Wild, I have promised many times not to divulge her secret. But you must know sooner or later, for something must be done for her soon, if she lives. Do you not mistrust what demon has control of her?"

"Yes I do; but cannot she be broken of the habit?"

"My dear girl, one might as well try to uproot the eternal rocks as to attempt breaking a person of the habit of morphine. She has taken the drug for fifteen years. I wonder she was not an inmate of an insane asylum long before now. She takes enough every day to kill ten men, who were not accustomed to its use. She has taken so much of the vile stuff that sometimes it ceases to have a quieting effect upon her. At such times she is a raving maniac. Frequently I am obliged to administer belladonna, which so affects her vision she can hardly see. Then again for weeks at a time I administer morphine hypodermically, that the effect upon her system may not

be so deleterious."

"What, can nothing be done? Is it a hopeless case?"

"It is absolutely hopeless unless she is sent to a sanatorium and remains a year or so, during which time its effect upon her system would be overcome in a measure. But I presume her desire for the drug would remain."

"Could she not leave off taking morphine and remain at home?"

"She could not, for in attempting to abandon it insanity would surely ensue."

"Does it not affect her mind at all times?"

"It certainly does. Miss Wild, I can remember your mother when she was as sweet and beautiful as a rose. She is now a nervous wreck. How she acquired the habit is all a mystery to me, for I never prescribed morphine for her."

"I wish that we might procure trained nurses and keep her with us at home during the trying ordeal of breaking off."

"It will be impossible, unless you consent to turn your home into a modern insane asylum, and in that case the experience would be too terrible to endure. You would yield to her heart-rending appeals for the drug before a week had passed. With the assistance of two nurses I kept it from her six days in succession three years ago. She went into delirium tremens, and broke the mirror, and three window panes. She struck one of the nurses with a toilet bottle, injuring her so badly she was taken to the hospital, where she remained two weeks under treatment. When she was discharged she was apparently as well as ever, but she demanded five thousand dollars of your father for alleged injuries and he acceded to her

demand without a murmur. I was thankful that you were away during the time. Your father is a wonderfully indulgent man, Miss Wild. I have been acquainted with him for many years, and I can truly say I never saw his equal."

The reception room was nearly filled with waiting patients, so with a heavy heart I sobbed my adieu to the doctor and hastened to my carriage.

Nature seemed to mock me as I rode home. I wished to be alone. On passing up to my room I paused at my mother's door, and as I stood and listened, wondering if she was sleeping, I soon heard her voice. "O God," she exclaimed, "my Father! and Friend, Oh save me from myself, Oh if Thou wilt but hear me. Thou knowest, O my God, how I have striven to quench this awful craving for that which takes away my reason. Oh release me from the power of the foul demon which I fear will drive my soul to crime. O Father! Father! hear me when I call. Hast Thou not made me? Am I not Thy child? Oh why this mad desire for the deadly stuff? Oh keep me from it! Give me strength to abandon it, and I will praise Thee evermore. O God, help me to be a blessing to my child! I love her, though she does not really love me. Oh send deliverance or death to my poor soul and save me from a madhouse!"

I could not stand longer and listen to her prayer, my heart ached for my poor mother; I longed to enter her room and clasp her to my heart. I feebly staggered up the stairs to my room, and prayed as I had never prayed before; not on bended knee, but in the silent closet of my soul. My heart seemed bursting with desire that God would heed my mother's prayer. My heart was filled

with love. Suffering has been the world's stumbling block down through all the ages. We read that the world was redeemed through suffering. The strangeness and sadness of it all impressed me as never before. I thought of the blessed Christ who walked this earth, how he opened the eyes of the blind, raised the dead, and forgave sin. I asked this same Christ to help me save my mother. At length I felt a sweet peace steal over my soul, "The peace which passeth all understanding," and I seemed to feel a will firmer than my own take possession of me. A power that was stronger than I had ever felt before seemed to uplift me, and a love greater than I had ever experienced filled my soul. I felt strong and fearless, for I was not alone. My God was with me on the battle field, and I heard Him say, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." I had not known that peace could come so easily, simply for the asking! I remembered all the years of my life. Oh how much I longed for God and had not known it. I had been hungry for the Heavenly unction and had realized God's goodness and uplifting power at last. It was such a supreme joy to know my mother loved me, I was sorry I had ever doubted her love, although I had heard her insane and unnatural declaration that she hated me, but now I felt that she was not responsible for this utterance. The fact that God is greater than any disease was being revealed to me. I had been told again and again that I had a prenatal tendency to distrust mankind. If I hoped to win my mother from her baleful habit I must rise to a higher plane myself. I must live above all hereditary tendencies. Is not God greater than heredity? The curtains of my soul were being lifted and the purifying light of Heaven was

streaming in. I felt its sweet and ennobling influence as never before. How selfish I had always been, and at times gloomy and morbid, misanthropic and repellent. Had I tried to make my home happy?

All the days of my life seemed to pass in quick succession before my mental vision. I was a child again playing with my dolls with little Helen Garland. I always led in those days, and my will was obeyed. I recalled the fact that Fred had once expressed his opinion of me by declaring that I was the most selfish girl he ever knew, and was glad I was not his sister. "I am as glad as you are," I said, "but I wish Helen was my sister." I asked my father one day if he would not adopt Helen. I never forgot how strangely his muscles contracted, leaving him pale as death. My mother remarked at the time she would sooner adopt Fred.

"I hate him!" I declared. I loved to dwell upon my childhood days, for I could find some excuse for my selfishness then. But later, as I entered society, I was more exacting than ever. I had lovers, but my heart did not respond to words of love. All the love of my heart was bestowed upon my friend, Helen Garland. When she married the minister I did not feel jealous; I knew that she had allowed herself to be captured by one for whom she had no great affection. Her religious nature made her consent to become Paul Greenwood's wife. She loved to worship. She loved to listen when her husband stood behind the desk, and preached of Him who is "the resurrection and the life." In Sunday-school she would gather the little children around her and tell them about the Saviour; how He took little children in His arms and blessed them, saying, "Of such is the kingdom of

heaven," and when she spoke of Jesus and His love, it seemed something new and beautiful. She was like a little child; she was happy because others were happy; she was interested in little matter-of-fact circumstances, and was always ready to put aside her own feelings, and sympathize with others. Unselfish Helen Garland! How her character stood out in contrast to mine. Oh, Helen! She was ever the joy of my heart. I resolved I would go to her on the morrow, and tell her all concerning my mother.

I would breathe into her ever-willing ear the story of my peace with God. I opened my Bible and read several chapters from its sacred pages. It was now a new book to me. Then I wrote several letters, and just as I finished writing, Miss Black was announced.

I went into the parlor to receive her, half wishing that she had deferred her call. She ran on in a light vein to which I was in no mood to listen, after which she spoke of Fred Garland. "I hear his wife is very sick, I believe the doctors do not give any hope of her recovery. I have just come from Mrs. Garland's. They have named the little one Helen. If Mrs. Garland should die, I presume he would take the child and come to Boston. He is so fond of his sister, he would hardly deem any other person capable of bringing up his child."

I remarked a peculiar glitter in her eyes, and recalled the fact that several years ago she had been Fred's sweetheart, and Madam Rumor had declared that Miss Black was broken-hearted when Fred Garland married and settled in the far west. "Let us hope that she will not die," I said. "How happy you look in contrast to Mrs. Greenwood," was her next remark. I was far from

happy, but I did not tell her so. But as wretched as I felt concerning my mother, a new life had opened up before me — a life of love. I would live to love! Now that I felt God's sunshine in my soul, I desired to cast sunshine all about my path. Sin is the insanity of life, I would be sane. I longed to tell of this new-found joy and inspiration; but I could not tell Miss Black, she would not respond to my touch. I could understand now why Helen was so happy and peaceful. But had she urged a religious life upon me, I should not have been receptive. "Example is better than precept." I had loved Helen because she reflected the Christ nature, pure and unselfish of heart. "The kingdom of heaven is within." She lived in a heavenly atmosphere, and was the artless, beneficent almoner of Christ's gifts. When Miss Black departed I was lost in thought. My heart was at peace with God, and tender with sympathy towards all my struggling race. My hope that had clung so fondly to the world, at last seemed to be anchored to the Eternal Rock which defies the troubled waters of sin and sorrow. Tides may swing me in their ebb and flow but I shall not be moved, I thought, as I remembered the Spotless One who had overcome the world.

I little surmised what awaited me in the near future. I was filled with joy and hope. I wondered why mortals should sin when there is such happiness in living the Truth. But sin creeps into the human heart before we are conscious of its approach. Ofttimes the shadows of night creep around us and we do not notice when it first begins to grow dark. We do not recall when the first rays of light fade from the skies, but after a time everything is dark around us, the sun has long since disap-

peared, the twilight has crept upon us and deepened and we are enshrouded in the black robe of night. We are awed into silent introspection by the mysterious change and our conscience stands appalled at the transition. The flood gates of God's sunshine should be lifted to fill the soul when it begins to grow dark lest sin shall enter in ere we are aware of its approach.

My father saw that I was happy when I met him in the evening. "A smiling face is fairer far than the rarest beauty," he remarked as he sat by my side. I had resolved to be complaisant. My father being a great lover of books, I led him to speak of what he had been reading recently. He was a fine conversationalist and I listened with exceeding interest as he reviewed several books. The conviction that I had missed a great deal by being so cold and distant towards him filled me with humiliation and shame. I would never frown upon my father again.

I spoke to him of my mother: "I have discovered the secret of my mother's strangeness and seclusion," I said. "I am determined to do all in my power to win her back to love, and life, and joy."

"My dear child, you little know what an impossible task is before you," was his sorrowful reply.

"All things are possible with God, and I have prayed to Him for help, father."

"So you pray, Irma? I have always hoped that you did."

"I have just begun to pray, I feel the need of a power stronger than any earthly power to help me."

"Irma, I pray without ceasing. My life is one long continual prayer for forgiveness: 'God be merciful to me a reprobate,' is the burden of my prayer. I cannot

find peace. Will you not pray for me also, my child?"

"My father — Oh my father, and you too are unhappy!" I put my arms about his neck and kissed his forehead. He was moved to tears. "Father, will you forgive me for being so cold and indifferent towards you all these years?" "It has been my own fault," he said, "I have nothing to forgive. But it is a joy to know that my child loves me; how hungry I have been for your love, God only knows. I have never been so happy before since your birth." "God loves his children far more than an earthly parent is capable of loving," I said, "and He is more willing to give them good gifts, we are taught from the Word of God, and he has also promised to put our sins behind his back and remember them no more." "But the cross He asks me to carry, Irma, seems greater than I can bear," he exclaimed, and he bowed his head and turned away. What could I say to him to ease the burden of years! With a loving embrace I reminded him of the lateness of the hour and bade him good-night.

CHAPTER V

The New Ideal

I SANK to rest that night as peacefully as a child. And when the soft warm light of morning came creeping into the sky I rose and sat by the window and watched the day unfold. As I sat there looking toward the East I thought of Christ, the gentle, loving, sympathetic Christ, who once walked this earth, and was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. I had found the highest ideal I could ever know, and I determined to walk with Him and live up to my ideal as nearly as possible. This morning I dressed myself in spotless white.

After having breakfasted with my father, who appeared more restless than usual, I went to my mother's room. I found her gowned in black, so we were in contrast as on the day previous.

An angry light gleamed in my mother's eyes. She seemed agitated and to be laboring under an excited condition of mind. "Irma," she commenced, "when I decided to relate to you the sad story of my life I intended to begin at the beginning and so go on to the bitter end. But I dreamed of my enemy last night and I must speak of her at once. She who came into my life and crushed out all the brightness there was in it. I have not breathed her name audibly for many, many years, but I want to curse her this morning." And with vengeful look and

high-raised hand she excitedly continued, "God curse Madelaine Wild! curse her by day and by night! curse her!" "Oh, mother, mother, do not curse anyone," I pleaded, "do you not know that God is love?" "Do you not know," she retorted, "that Madelaine Wild is a devil? Let me paint her for you, this beautiful fiend. She won your father's love before you were born. He became so enslaved by her fascinations he wished me, his wife, dead. He sent me back to my old mountain home and I made him believe that I was dead and buried. When he sent me from him he did not know that I was to become a mother, neither did I. He was ever longing and praying that a child might be born to us. But I was determined that there never should be one until I had first won his love. We traveled the first year after we were married. We went abroad, and even without love existing between us, it was a measurably happy year. For we were at least good comrades and friends; your father's health began to improve and he rejoiced to find himself growing strong and healthy. The beauties and wonders of the Old World drove me nearly frantic with delight. Beautiful Paris! Shall I ever forget it and all the wonders I saw there! Some time I will tell you about those glorious days. We returned after a year's absence and settled down in Boston. I could hardly realize that your father was the person I married, he became so much improved. I grew to admire his sterling qualities and I could have loved him had he taught me to; but he did not try and seemed indifferent to any manifestation of affection. I could find no fault with his treatment, but I yearned for his love until my pride rose in resentment at his coldness when I steeled my heart against him as much as possible,

for alas, I realized anew, he had only married me that I might become a mother to his children.

"The summer following our return from abroad, I went home for a long visit. I was in delicate health, and I knew the cause but concealed the fact from your father. I had not been at home two weeks before I confided the truth to my poor old mother. I think my mind must have been somewhat affected by my condition, for I grew to be very unreasonable. Now I had reached my childhood's home I grew bitter towards my husband. I seemed to forget that I had frankly told him that I was marrying for money. My mother appeared greatly vexed because my husband did not accompany me home. I told her that he was to come for me when I was ready to return. But that did not pacify her. She quickly reached the conclusion that I was unhappy. I made no attempt to conceal my material prosperity and I showered gifts among my people most freely. My husband was so generous with me that I was sometimes annoyed. He never forgot that I married for money, and he was careful that I should not be disappointed. Oh why could I not have been as generous with him as he was with me? Why did I deny him his heart's desire? In learning my condition my mother made a suggestion which caused the hot blood to rush to my face, I was so shocked! I am ashamed to tell you this, Irma. But I must be truthful: I denied myself of motherhood! I came down to death's door, and my husband was telegraphed for. His sorrow was intense when the good old doctor told him all he knew and said to him, 'I am sorry that your hopes are blighted, Mr. Wild, but you have reason to be thankful that your wife is alive.' My husband was very tender and thoughtful,

regretting exceedingly that I had taken the journey. He suspected nothing wrong. How manly he was, and how mean and guilty I felt. I resolved I would never be guilty again of committing a like sin, and I longed for the time to come when I might make him happy, for he was so gentle and kind that I made myself believe he was learning to love his wife. Irma, you have doubtless discovered long ago that your father married beneath him. You are keen enough to have realized this fact." "You must not undervalue yourself, mother," I said, "you know that I am as nearly akin to you as I am to my father." "In appearance you resemble neither of us," was her reply, "but I am sure you have a prenatal tendency to hate and distrust mankind; and I know that you have your father's passion for children."

"Why were you and my father not happy after I came?" "It was too late! too late! Madelaine Wild had won your father's love and my bitterest malediction is better than she deserves. About three months after my return to Boston from my first visit home, this woman whom I have such reason to hate, came to visit us. Madelaine Wild was the widow of Charles Wild, the young man I spoke of yesterday, your father's cousin, who came to board at our mountain home the year before we were married. I heard your father congratulate his cousin on his engagement at that time. 'She is beautiful as Venus, wise as Minerva, and proud as Juno,' said your father. 'Do you realize her worth, Charles?' Neither of them knew that I was within hearing. 'Madelaine Dale,' said your father, 'is the most beautiful woman I ever met, but the thought of having to respond to so brilliant a mind as she possesses would weary me.' 'Oh, George, you are

weak and nervous now, if you had been in your normal health and spirits when you first met Madelaine, you would have been the lucky man,' said his cousin with a laugh.

"'I shall never love another, Charlie. My heart cries out for Amy, and always will.'

"'You think so now but the time will come when you will marry.'

"'Yes, I shall marry but not for love, Charlie, I am engaged to Bernice Duhammell.'

"'How can you expect me to believe it?'

"'It is true whether you believe it or not. I have not deceived her, neither has she deceived me. She has health, and I have wealth, and we think we will manage to live in peace.'

"It was the last week Charlie was with us, he had come to return with George. 'I think I will be off on the first train in the morning,' said Charlie. 'I want to train myself to the conviction that I am going to have Bernice Duhammell for a cousin before I meet her again.'

"I naturally had a great curiosity to see Madelaine Dale. I saw her but twice before she came into my life to destroy it forevermore. I was one of her bridesmaids, and your father was best man. Her beauty far surpassed anything I had heard of her and I at once saw she was a woman of fascinating power. They lived in New York after they were married, and your father saw them frequently in their home. In two years her husband died, and we attended his funeral. She was just as charming in her black crepe, as she had been in her white silk and orange blossoms, more so, if possible, and the violet shadows on her eyelids were entrancing. We invited her

to our home, and several months later she came. I have tried to picture her designing heart to you, but her transcendent physical beauty compelled the admiration of all men. I cannot do justice to her personal charms. But one physical imperfection was discernible upon her beautiful features; this was a tiny birthmark in the center of her forehead. Sometimes this was unpleasantly conspicuous especially when she was strongly excited. She had a vein of melancholy at times which was exceedingly becoming. Her keen and subtle mental endowments were commensurate with her physical beauty, but she was wholly devoid of womanly tenderness. I have a picture of her if you care to behold the insidious despoiler of your mother's happiness." She went to a small ebony cabinet and produced the picture, placing it in my hand. I was spellbound as I gazed on the portrait. What a study! That the original of that picture was a wicked woman I was loath to believe.

What my mother said to me during the next half hour I shall never recall. I came to my senses when she snatched the picture from my hand. "You are bewitched, as your father was with her beauty," she said. "I wish I had not shown you the picture. Your eyes are filled with admiration." I could not reply. My mother continued, "I was not long in discovering your father's infatuation for Madelaine Wild. I do not censure him; he was a helpless captive under her mystic spell, a victim to her subtle influence. I despised her. She was as tall as you are, and finely proportioned, and your father's voice betrayed his admiration when he addressed her. She would sit and look at him with her half-closed ravishing eyes while they talked of music, art, and literature.

Nothing escaped my notice. The days flew by as days will, on golden wings to them but on leaden wings to me. I had never been taught self-control; I made no attempt to conceal my jealousy and hatred. They appeared not to realize that I was out of harmony with everything around me and most miserable. Your father tried very hard to be exceedingly attentive to me. I felt it was a labored effort. I did not distrust his honor but I was jealous of his love. That he loved Madelaine Wild and she loved him was too manifest for my peace of mind. I told him one evening when we were alone that I felt that I was one too many in the house. 'What do you mean, Bernice?' he exclaimed. 'You grieve me by speaking thus.' 'Well, I am not grieved,' I said, yet all the while my heart was breaking. He kissed me. It was an unusual thing for him to do. It is to keep peace, I thought, so that Madelaine may enjoy her visit. The thought made me very angry. 'Bernice, we may be happier some time,' he said. 'God grant that our union may yet be productive of a parental joy, a precious charge that shall inspire us with mutual devotion. We met with a great misfortune last summer, I shall never cease to regret it. I sincerely hope, my dear, that the welcome stork may seek our home without another such accident.' 'It was no misfortune! No accident!' I exclaimed in an angry voice. 'No misfortune! No accident!' your father repeated. With excitement and agitation he continued, 'Bernice Wild, you cannot mean ———'

"An ashen pallor o'erspread his countenance as the possible portentous meaning of my words broke upon his mind. While he regarded me with a horrified stare I unfolded to him the shameful truth. But I withheld the

fact that my mother had suggested the course which I pursued. Her object must have been to save me from care, Irma; I do not want you to despise my poor mother."

"Is she living?" I gasped.

"No, but I do not want you to think ill of or hastily condemn her. She had declared many times that she was like the 'old woman who lived in a shoe.' It had been the bane and burden of her life, bearing children. 'I do not want you to suffer, Bernice,' she said. I did suffer nevertheless, and came near dying, and I wish I had. No one need ever expect to escape suffering by breaking the laws of Nature." "Would you not have been a suicide if you had died?" I ventured to enquire. "Perhaps, but I believe in the death of the wicked: I believe they fall to sleep never to awaken. The gift of God was eternal life, but I have never felt it was for me. I knew that I had sinned, but I did not look upon it as your father did when I confessed my guilt to him. He denounced me as a *murderer*. 'So you murdered your offspring?' he said, white with rage. 'Bernice Wild, remember from this minute, so long as you live, you are a wife to me only in name!' I wanted to fall at his feet and implore his forgiveness, but his anger frightened me. I was speechless, my doom was pronounced. Oh why did I tell him? It must have been fate. Do you believe in fate, Irma?" "I believe in God," I said. "If Madelaine Wild had not come to our home," she continued, "my secret would never have been divulged; and when, in the fullness of time, you were born, all would have been well. His love for her made me angry. I hope you understand, Irma, how she was the cause of separating us."

"The following day he offered me half his fortune if I would consent to our separation. Heart-broken though I was I unhesitatingly consented. I cannot tell you my grief. I was wild with sorrow. I realized at last that I was madly in love with my husband. I packed up my belongings and returned to my old mountain home. I was a very rich woman but unspeakably distressed; I cared not for my money; the cold, pale face of my husband with its expression of scorn and contempt was ever before my mental vision.

"Memory was the constant specter who sang to me the songs of yesterday. She sat by my side and whispered of those pleasant days abroad. She whispered to me of your father's virtues from early morn till late at night. I was ill with mental agony. I wondered if Madelaine was still in his home, that palatial home where I was once mistress. Great God! May you never know anguish like mine, Irma. I wonder that it did not kill me. But sorrow seldom kills, though it frequently dethrones reason. I marvel that I was not insane. Had death parted us I could have borne it. But to be separated for such a cause, to feel that another possessed what rightfully belonged to me was like torture. My sorrow was wearing upon me. My poor old mother would have died for me, she pitied me so much. I did not go into society at all. I was an object of compassion to all who looked into my face. I took no joy in my elegant clothing; I evaded the very sunshine, the one longing of my soul was to die.

"I finally decided that I would write to your father. I wrote him a long letter and begged that I might return to him. 'I have learned to love you, George,' I wrote.

'Oh forgive I implore; forgive me and love me just a little. I had rather be a beggar with your love than be the richest woman on earth without it. I know you do not love me, but if you will forgive me, and let me return to you, I will be so devoted I will teach you to love me. My dear husband,' I wrote, 'I find that the hope that was denied you last summer will be realized. I did not know it when I left you. For the sake of our unborn child forgive me, George, and permit me to return. Oh, may I come home to be a blessing to you if my life is spared?' I rambled on thus, filling sheet after sheet of paper with supplications and expressions of remorse. My tears fell like rain; my letter should have melted a heart of stone. It did not move your father. For a month I walked to the post office every mail. How I longed for an assuring letter, the letter that never came. I was doomed to disappointment. When I would walk from the office I would ofttimes tremble with excitement born of despair. I was so wretchedly unhappy that these weak words give scant expression of the depth of my distress, but if you could realize the suffering I endured, your heart would be touched with pity for me, I am sure." "I do pity you, mother, I cannot tell you how my heart aches for you," I said, "but the past comes not back again; try and forget it."

"I cannot forget those days when life was a burden, and I longed to lay it down. I was tempted to commit suicide. One day I was telling my nephew, Frank Duhammell, how I longed to die. He was a happy youth about sixteen, full of life and joy. 'Why, Aunt Bernice, do you long to die?' I told him I had quarreled with my husband and left him forever. At that moment it

flashed through my mind what he had said when we had first become acquainted; he had declared that men always loved dead women better than they did living ones. If I was dead perhaps he would love me. He would certainly cease to hate me. 'Frank,' I said, on the impulse of the moment, 'I wish you would write a letter to my husband and tell him I am dead.'

"'Why auntie, would he not expect to come to your funeral? He would find a lively corpse awaiting him,' said Frank, laughing.

"'Write to him that I am dead and buried. Tell him that I died of a broken heart and did not want him sent for knowing that he hated me.'"

"Oh mother," I exclaimed, "did not the still, small voice warn you not to do it?"

"Perhaps so, but I wanted to do something to awaken your father's interest in me. Frank knew that he was telling an untruth, but that was all, and he was very fond of me and wanted me to be avenged. And so the letter was written. I expected he would hasten to communicate with my people. I cherished the hope that the news of my death would awaken regret in his heart. If he manifested any sorrow I would inform him at once that the letter was simply a joke of Frank's. Again I was doomed to disappointment. I did not hear a word from my husband. Then a horrible fear took possession of me. Believing me dead he might, after a reasonable length of time, marry Madelaine Wild! Four weeks after Frank sent him word that I was dead I wrote him another letter, I longed to write it with my heart's blood, I felt such anguish. Again I told him the naked truth, again I implored him to forgive me. To this wild appeal for

mercy and just one line to tell me of his forgiveness, I received no reply. Then I cursed him! I prayed that I might be revenged through my unborn child. I prayed that my child might hate and loathe its father.

"When, with feeble monitions, your spirit unfolded to me your presence, I prayed that you might hate mankind and I think you do, Irma." "You are mistaken, mother, I do not hate anyone," I said, sorrowfully.

"I ofttimes recall the beauty of my rival. If he had not learned to love her my letters would not have been ignored, I felt sure. I had perfect faith in your father's honor and chastity; he abhorred immorality. My conviction of the purity of his character assured me that he and Madelaine were not together; but if I were to die I was sure he would turn to her. Then I began to hope my life would be spared. I would dream of Madelaine's handsome face by night. At times I fancy that you resemble her. Such things frequently occur. A mother's emotional presentiments have great power over her unborn child. The tiny red spot on Madelaine's forehead was a birthmark; I have often wished that it had extended over her entire face, so far at least as to destroy her beauty. Such physical beauty in women too often is employed to tempt and distract good men from the path of rectitude and duty.

"Eight months had dragged wearily away since my return to my old home when you were born. You were a sickly baby, weighing only six pounds. I was anxious for you to live to avenge my wrongs. Again the longing to see your father, or at least to hear from him, was intense beyond measure. I wrote the third letter. 'Come and take your child,' I wrote, 'else I will send her to

some home.' This letter brought him to my side. He came when you were a month old, but not as I had hoped he might. He had no pleasure in the birth of his child, yet you were very sweet and fair. I longed to ask him to take me too, but I knew he would refuse me, he was so stern and cold.

"'You are an unnatural mother,' he said, 'to be willing to part with your child.' 'I think it is my duty,' I replied, 'you married me for the sole purpose of having children. I have fulfilled my destiny now.' 'Keep her if you wish,' said he. 'No, I desire you to have her. Did you really think me dead, George?' I asked.

"'I most certainly did.'

"'I am sorry that I deceived you. When you awakened to the knowledge that I was alive it must have been terrible to you.'

"'More terrible than you can possibly imagine. I wonder that God spared my reason.'

"He looked ten years older than when I last saw him. 'How you hate me!' I exclaimed, 'but you need not worry, I will never, never trouble you, but I pray to be avenged through my child. May she sometime hate you even as you hate me.' 'I have no fear for the child,' he said, 'she will be properly cared for.'"

"And so you parted with me?" I faltered. "Yes, I wanted to feel my child, a part of me, was with him in his home. I hoped that he would change towards me and send for me to come to him. I longed for you to grow old enough to talk, old enough to inquire concerning your mother. But I did not wait for that time to come. When you were three years old I buried all my pride and returned without permission to the beautiful home I had

left. I was dying by inches; I had grown mercenary; I was even stingy with my mother and all others, and they all seemed to love me less, with the exception of my loyal mother. I fancied it would be thus. I had invested my money at a large profit. I returned to my husband richer by far than when I left him. I hated the money! 'Take it,' I said to him. 'Let me come and live with my child. Take me back, George. Take me back!' 'Yes, Bernice, I will,' at last he said, 'but as I told you more than three years ago, you are a wife to me only in name.'"

"Did I awaken no love in your heart, mother?" I asked.

"I can hardly tell. You were a lovely child, but in a way I was disappointed in you. I had not seen you since you were a month old. I had fancied you as a sunny-haired child, a blonde. Your eyes were blue when you were born, but they had changed color. They were dark brown when you were three years old, and your hair was nearly as dark as it is now. You did not take to me with natural fondness. You loved your father and he adored you, and thus you grew in distraint. The years have come and gone leaving their many impressions of sorrow. I have confessed to you my sins. I am very hungry for the love of my husband and child."

"Are you not hungry for God's love?" I asked. "He can pour the balm of peace upon the troubled waters of your soul. No sin is so great that God cannot forgive it," I said.

"Does not the Bible tell us of an unpardonable sin?" asked my mother.

"Yes, it means a sin we are not sorry for, the sin we still cling to and have not repented of."

"I have not given much thought to religious things. I have told you all I have to say, and now I wish you would kindly leave me, for I am very weary."

I did not wait a second bidding. I arose at once and departed, and as I turned to close the door and say good-bye, my mother was opening her little cabinet which contained the drug that was killing her.

CHAPTER VI

Bereft of Reason

I TARRIED in the hall long enough to don my hat and long coat to conceal my gown, which was not a street dress, and walked out into the bright May sunshine. How good it seemed to be out of doors. The trees were in blossom and everything in Nature seemed to be praising God. His sunshine was around and about me, yet I felt sad and depressed. I thought of my father and mother, their darkened lives which should have been luminous with love. Somehow I felt that my father had been the one most wronged. My mother's story had not left the impression upon me which she had desired. I seemed to love my father more than I ever had. I had resolved to save my mother from the insatiable craving that was dragging her down to death. I would keep that resolve. My mother's story had caused me to feel that my maternal grandmother was a woman far below my ideal. How unlike she was to my father's mother whom he had never ceased to love and regret. I was exceedingly glad that I had never visited any of my Green Mountain relatives. I never should. How strangely things seemed to happen in this world! If my Vermont grandparents had never ventured upon their scheme of taking summer boarders, my father would not have wandered to their country farm-house, and probably would never have met my mother. In that case

where would I have been? Was it fate? Did I beg to be born? Did I seek to exist? The questions which were pressed upon me I could not answer. The fact was that I did exist, and some time, somewhere, it would all be made clear. There seemed to be a voice behind me saying, "Lo this is the way, walk ye in it." I would not climb upon the judgment seat and condemn my parents for their part in my existence. God was my Father and my Mother. I was a child of God. The warmth of His sunshine had reached my heart at last. How had I managed to walk alone so long! I wondered. By the cross is the world redeemed.

My walk was invigorating and uplifting and I returned feeling strong to take up the burden of life, for "His yoke is easy and His burden is light." I did not see my father or mother during the remainder of the day and I found plenty of time for thought. I prayed that our home might sometime typify and foreshadow the home which is perfect and eternal. I resolved I would remain at home in the future more than I had in the past and work for this great desire of my heart. The next morning I dragged out my drawing materials and began to sketch the beautiful scene from my window. It seemed to me my hand had lost its cunning, it had been so long since I had felt any true inspiration of my artistic temperament. But my ardor and adoration of nature and nature's God was returning and I soon felt assured that I could make the canvas glow with feeling, warmth, and beauty once again. I painted every morning until the picture was completed, and then I presented it to my mother on her birthday. She thanked me warmly, but I knew she could not fully appreciate anything in her

present abnormal condition. A week had passed since she had related her story. We had been out riding several times since. She was usually like one in a dream.

Every evening I enjoyed my father's society. I had not seen Helen for a week and one afternoon I went for a walk intending to call upon her before I returned home. I walked a long distance and was too weary to return on foot, so I boarded a street car. Among its occupants was Mr. Greenwood with whom I could exchange but a word ere he reached his destination. "Call on Helen," he said to me as he left the car.

I thought he looked sad and anxious and I resolved at once to do his bidding. On reaching Helen's home I glanced up at the window where she usually sat, but she was not there. I hurried up the walk and was about to ring the bell, when I saw this notice, "Come quietly in without ringing." I obeyed the injunction and noiselessly as possible entered. A death-like stillness pervaded the house. I entered the parlor, but not a sound broke the silence, although I remained there in painful anxiety for nearly half an hour. Then I went to the dining-room, and on the table I saw a letter addressed to Helen. It was in Fred Garland's handwriting, and was post-marked, Seattle, Washington. I suspected at once that it contained sad tidings which had produced one of Helen's ill turns with her dear, loving heart. She was not strong enough to endure sorrow. I ofttimes feared her heart attacks would prove fatal. My father had been troubled with his heart ever since I could remember, and had once made the statement that it was a tough little organ and would keep on beating no matter what happened. At length I ventured to rap at Helen's door. It was

opened by the nurse, who motioned me away with her deft hand, and closed the door without speaking. I felt that I could not leave the house without learning Helen's condition, besides had not her husband requested me to call. I again sought the parlor. Very soon the lady who had responded to my rap entered. "Is this Miss Wild?" she inquired, and hastened to add that she was Miss Cook, Mrs. Greenwood's nurse. Being assured of my identity, she handed me the letter which I had seen upon the dining-room table. "Mrs. Greenwood is too ill to see you today," she said, "but she desires you to know the contents of this letter which she received last evening from her brother. She wishes you to call again tomorrow." "Shall I take the letter home with me?" I asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Greenwood wishes you to take it home and read it."

"Is she dangerously ill?"

"Not now, all danger is past, the doctor says, but she must keep quiet and see no one but her doctor and nurse today."

Placing the letter in my reticule I withdrew, but I made no attempt to read it until I was in my own room. Then with suppressed emotion I opened Fred Garland's letter and read as follows:

My Dear Sister:

How can I prepare you for the sad news which I have to relate. I wish I were by your side where I could put my arms around you and breathe into your sympathetic ear my tale of woe. My hand is so unsteady I can hardly write. You must be brave for me, dear, and for your own sake. You know that baby came somewhat sooner

than was expected, and I did not receive the news until I reached Seattle. When I arrived home my mother-in-law met me at the door with a pale and haggard face. Tears were in her eyes, and she greeted me with a kiss, a thing she never did before, but a mutual sorrow made her tender and loving. "Violette is very ill, her life hangs by a thread," she said. "Cannot I go to her?" I asked. "Oh yes, she has called constantly for you. The doctor hopes that she may improve at sight of you." I made myself presentable and with a heavy heart hurried in to see my wife. In my anguish at finding her so ill I had not inquired for the baby. I had learned from a newspaper which I had obtained on the train when I reached Seattle, that my wife had given birth to a daughter. I had never seen Violette ill, and I entered her presence with a great weight of fear pulling at my heart-strings. I was prepared to behold her wan, white, and silent. But instead her eyes were larger and brighter than I had ever seen them, and her cheeks were unusually red. Her golden hair hung loosely around her shoulders. She looked more like a picture than a living person; it was evident that she did not know me although she laughed wildly when she glanced towards me. "Oh pretty little baby! Little baby doll! Won't Fred laugh when he comes and sees our little baby girl! Pretty baby with yellow hair just like a great big doll. Bring baby, nurse. Come Freddy, come and see our baby!"

"She is delirious!" I said to the nurse. "Yes sir, she has been in this condition ever since her child was born. Speak to her, Mr. Garland. The doctor hoped that she would know you. He hoped the sight of you would restore her to reason. She has constantly called for you."

I bent over the pillow and gently placed my hand upon her head. "Violette," I said, "do you not know me?" "Take your hand off my head, the doctor told nurse to take the fire out of my head with ice water. Give me ice water, quick!" she cried. The nurse came and placed a

tiny piece of ice between her parched lips. As soon as it had dissolved she began talking again. Not incoherently as delirious persons usually do, but as though the years had fallen from her and she had suddenly become a little child. "Baby wears long clothes, I'm going to cut them off when Fred comes. I guess he won't come. I guess he loves his pretty sister better than he loves me." Then she began to sob bitterly, "I want Fred! I want Fred!" she kept saying. My own eyes were full of tears, but it was not so sad to hear her cry as it was to hear her laugh. The doctor soon came and I asked him in regard to her condition. "Mr. Garland, I think I can save her life, but if I do she will become hopelessly insane," he said. Helen, my despair was so great that I swooned for the first time in my life. When I recovered consciousness I was in my own room on the couch, and near me on a blue velvet divan in a corner of the room was a little pink and white bundle — little Helen Garland. She was like a beautiful large doll as poor Violette had said. She was a thing of beauty but I could not look upon her with joy remembering all it had cost my poor sweet Violette to give life to this tiny being. But I kissed her for your sake, Helen, because she bears your name. The doctor who was standing by my side gave me a glass of wine and without speaking left the room. I fancied that I was alone with my baby and my own great, crushing sorrow. All at once I seemed to feel a presence. I glanced across the room and beheld my brother-in-law, Gerald Strong. His handsome blue eyes were fixed upon me with an expression almost divine. Such love, such tenderness, and above all such hope as beamed from his countenance I had never seen before. He saw me, yet he was looking beyond me. He was looking far beyond all that this little earth life contains. He might have been listening to the heavenly choir, his face was so filled with divine love. My dear sister, I hope you may some day behold the face of Gerald Strong. But you will never see it as I saw it that morning. He was doing for me what I

could not do for myself. I felt as though the Deity were present. I could not speak; the sight of him gave me such a thrill! An unforgetable thrill. At length he arose and came toward me and stood by my side. I stretched out my hand to him, but he did not take it. Silently he stood. After a while he went to the little bundle of pink and white, brought it to me, placed my baby gently in my arms and passed from the room. I rose with renewed strength and carried the baby in where her mother was. Was she dead, my sweet Violette? She was wan, and pale, and silent. "She is sleeping, she will never awaken unless I administer a stimulant," said the doctor, bending over her.

"Leave her with the great Physician. He who is above all and over all. He rules all things wisely. Let His will be done," said Gerald Strong.

The doctor turned to me, I humbly bowed my head. "She will soon pass on," he said, and left the room. The nurse followed, taking the baby with her. A heavenly smile was upon the face of Gerald as he pointed to the bed. Just above Violette's head was a beautiful light. It was burning very low but seemed to increase in size and brightness the longer we gazed upon it. Just above it in letters of gold for one brief minute, appeared this inscription, LOVE.

I did not understand its meaning. But I felt that Violette was in the arms of Infinite Love. What more could I desire? What more could I ask? I only knew that I wanted her! I wanted her!

She did not die, she lives, but not for me. I would that dark oblivion might draw the veil and hide me from the knowledge of the world. Would that I had never lived! "Let me be blotted out!" was the despairing cry of my heart. Violette awakened still delirious. Her mother is prostrate with grief. Next week Gerald will go with me to place our darling in a private asylum. Oh Helen, it is a fearful thing to see the one I love mentally unbalanced; at first I could not consent to her being

taken away. She does not know any of us, she is like a good child the greater part of the time, perfectly happy and contented. I pray that her shattered mind may be restored to its pristine vigor and sweetness, but the doctor gives little hope. Gerald believes that the light which we saw above her head was an omen for good. "Her reason will surely return," he affirms. Gerald Strong is a great man, and he is the whitest man I ever knew. He possesses a masterly mind. Since his father's death two years ago, he has been deeply interested in the occult. He has investigated several different isms and religions and he declares that he has found much good in each one. He is a strong believer in the power of mind over matter. He has great power of thought and is broad and generous. And best of all he is not afraid to say, "I do not know," hence I have great faith in his assertions.

May I come to you, dear Helen, with my little baby daughter, for a time at least? Mrs. Strong, Violette's mother, will spend the summer with her sister who lives near the hospital, where we are to board our poor Violette. I should be insane were it not for Gerald. His faith is so strong I can but hope. This is a rambling letter, but I have entered into all the details because I knew you would desire me to do so, and in a way it has been a comfort to commune with you in thought. Shall we come, your little namesake, and your unhappy brother?

Lovingly, FRED.

P. S. One week has passed into eternity since I wrote the above. My brother-in-law says that he shall accompany me East. On Wednesday we carried our loved one to the hospital. She is not violent but is wilful like a child, determined to go out of doors. The ordeal of leaving her with strangers was more than I could endure. Twice I swooned, but Gerald was my support. I am glad that he is going East with me. I shall also bring a nurse for dear little Helen. If I am asking too much of you do not hesitate to tell me. Try not to let my sorrow cast too dark a shadow over your life. God bless and keep you till we meet again. FRED.

CHAPTER VII

The New Inspiration

DID people ever write a complete history of their lives I wonder? Did they not withhold some thought or purpose, some hidden sin perhaps, some desire that they would not admit even to themselves? In writing my autobiography I determined that it should at least be true. I will be just to all the characters who have entered into my life as I have understood them. We do not fully know ourselves even, much less can we read another's inner life; but I have endeavored to reveal human nature as I have found it in myself and reflected by others.

After reading Fred Garland's sad, sad letter, the thought uppermost in my mind was not, as it should have been, one of sympathy for the terrible sorrow of Helen's brother, but a strong feeling of interest in his friend — Gerald Strong.

When Fred Garland wrote of him, that he was "the whitest man he ever met," I understood his meaning; he had the purest soul. I knew that Fred had known many good men. The best one I would like to see. I, a man hater, as my poor mother had so many times declared me to be, already felt that I should admire this noble character. The ideal that at times in my womanly musings my heart portrayed was grand, pure, and immaculate of soul. Was he a blonde I wondered, being very dark my-

self the man I admired must be my opposite. I had never felt that it was possible for me to love until now. Fred's description concerning Gerald Strong had strangely impressed me. After all he might be a middle-aged man with a family. I was vexed with myself for the foolish thoughts which I entertained, but try as I would I could not banish them from my mind.

It was several days before I again called at Helen's. I had sent her flowers, and had heard from her every day. She was in her usual health again. I had not returned Fred's letter. I read some parts of it every day, and mused over those words, "A great man; the purest I ever knew." What a friend he must be. How he had supported and comforted Fred, even when his own heart must have been breaking with poignant sorrow. My interest in him grew with each fresh perusal of the letter, until his character seemed to embody itself as something approaching the divine.

I was very busy for a week or more, having a dressmaker and seamstress at the house. After reading Fred's letter I purchased another gown, a pale blue crepe-de-chine, for the awakening of my soul to the possibility of love made me desire beauty in outward things. A few days later Helen sent for me. Of course I went at her bidding. She was beautiful as ever; I was surprised for I expected to find her bowed down with grief for her brother. Her sympathy for him was intense, but the anticipation of seeing him again had strangely excited her and given her strength.

"They will be here tomorrow, Fred, baby, and the nurse, and Gerald Strong, Fred's brother-in-law," she said. "I am getting their rooms ready for them." Dear

Helen, she would lay down her life for her brother I verily believed, indeed I feared that this might be the result some day, for he did not seem to realize how dangerous her heart attacks were.

"You are working too hard, Helen, cannot I assist you?" I asked. "Oh no, the maid is capable of attending to all the extra work, but she would not arrange the things to make them look homelike as I can." She took me into Fred's room, and then into the baby's room. The latter was all in pure white except for the carpet which had blue forget-me-nots scattered over it. No other color was visible. The laces, the ribbons, and draperies were all of pure white. It was beautiful to behold, so dainty and new, like the little stranger who is coming to occupy it. Fred's room was blue, and everything in exquisite taste. "Mr. Strong will occupy the guest chamber," she remarked, quite indifferently.

"How old a gentleman is Mr. Strong?" I asked.

"I think he is about Fred's age."

"Is he married?"

"Oh no. Fred told me when he was here that Violette's brother was not a marrying man, consequently he never indulged in flirtations. Coquetry he despises. 'I never kissed but two women in my life,' he once informed Fred, 'one was my mother, the other my sister.'

"He is very magnetic, Fred says. He has studied hypnotism and I believe he holds a hypnotic power over my brother. You read in Fred's letter about the light over Violette's bed. I believe that was the mysterious power of hypnotism. Of course there was no light there, and no inscription."

I did not reply, but recalled the fact that Helen had

declared that she had a vision not long since. "O consistency, thou art a jewel!" I had never known Helen to be inconsistent before, but probably she had come to the conclusion that her vision was only a dream after all.

I remained with Helen until the evening shadows fell. "It will be a long time before I shall have her all to myself again," I thought, but I was not jealous any more. I had tarried so late that Helen and her maid accompanied me home, and I invited Helen up to my room to show her my new gowns. I found things piled up all around my mother's door. Fanny, hearing us, came out of the room. She made excuses for the confusion, "Mrs. Wild's room has been cleaned today," she explained, "and before I had a chance to replace the bric-a-brac she fell asleep, and so I thought I would wait until morning."

"It is all right, Fanny. We can get along nicely. Come, Helen," I said, as she did not follow. I looked around and saw she was standing spell-bound, as though rooted to the spot, and was holding in her hand the picture of Madelaine Wild which my mother had shown to me the week before. I went up to her as if to remove the picture from her hands, but she grasped it firmly and followed me into my room.

"Who is she, Irma?"

"It is a picture of an old acquaintance of my father's and mother's."

"What is her name?"

"Madelaine Wild."

"Where is she now?"

"I do not know. I do not know whether she is living or dead. How strangely you look, Helen. What is the matter?"

"Irma, that is the woman whom I saw bending over the pink casket covered with Easter lilies. Yes, it is she, somewhat younger in this picture, but the same person, the same mouth like a Cupid's bow, the same dark eyes and waving hair, the same expression. Everything is the same only the woman I saw in my vision was older than when she had this picture taken."

"Oh nonsense!" I exclaimed. "You are taking the resemblance too seriously."

"Irma, it was a vision! It was that person grown older, the only thing lacking is the little red spot in the forehead, but that might not show in the picture."

Great heaven! My mother had told me about the little red birthmark on Madelaine's forehead. I felt convinced now that Helen was right. She had had a vision, and no dream. "So strange! So strange!" she murmured. I gave her no more information, but if I lived to see the light of another day, I mentally resolved that my father should tell me all that he knew concerning beautiful Madelaine Wild. I had no heart to show my new gowns. It was obvious that her mind was deeply absorbed in that picture.

When Helen kissed me good-night it was in an absent-minded formal way, her lips being without warmth or fervor and perhaps mine were also, for an uncanny chill possessed me, my nervous system being greatly perturbed by the incidents of the evening.

The following morning I carried the picture to my father. "Great heavens, Irma!" he excitedly exclaimed, "where did you obtain this?" I told him that Helen Greenwood had found it in the hall, on the way to my room. "Whose likeness is it, father?" I enquired. "It

is the picture of a friend of mine whom I have not seen for many long years," was his feeling reply. "It is the picture of one whom I never expect to behold again on earth." "Is she dead?" I asked. "I know not whether she be living or dead; she is dead to me." "Did you love her?" I softly asked with sympathetic tenderness. "I loved her more than I did my own soul!" he answered with deep feeling, and a moment later added, "Perhaps that is the reason we had to separate."

I did not care for him to know that my mother had told me the story of her life. And so I was a little artful, and asked questions I might have answered myself, for I was eager to learn all I could about Madelaine Wild. I could no longer doubt that Helen had seen her in a vision. "Did you know Madelaine Wild before you met my mother?" "Yes, I knew her before I ever saw your mother, and I knew more of her after I thought your mother was dead. Irma, at a certain time in our lives your mother and I separated. I supposed that it was forever. I made over to her half of my fortune and felt certain that she would be happier without me than she had been with me. She had been my wife three years. The chief motive that guides us on earth is the desire for happiness. Irma, I longed for happiness. It was in your mother's power to bestow it upon me. She killed the hope and frustrated the desire of my heart. This she accomplished by a criminal act which I could not forgive. I deemed it best that we should separate. After she had been away a few weeks I received word that she was dead and buried. The letter containing this false report was signed, Frank Duhammell. As your mother had a brother by that name I in-

ferred that he was the author of the letter, and did not doubt the truthfulness of the statement. I have since learned from your mother's own lips that she instigated the letter, that a young lad, her nephew, bearing his father's name, was merely a tool in her hands." He paused as though he had finished all he had to say.

"Can you tell me anything more concerning Madelaine Wild?"

"No; I cannot tell you anything more. I have not seen or heard from her for more than twenty years. But I could tell you a great deal concerning her in those far-away days. She was beautiful as you see by her picture. But this picture looks older than when I last saw her. Where did you say it was found?"

"In the hall, upstairs."

"How did it happen to be there?"

I frankly confessed that it must have come from my mother's room.

"Why did you not return it to her?"

"I will do so," I said, and reached out my hand for the picture. "No, no, money could not buy this picture; it is all I have left of the most joyous period of my life, a sacred memento of a few brief hours of bliss, and this precious token which was long ago stolen from me is now restored by your dear hand."

He took my hand and pressed it to his lips as he remarked with emotion, "Intuition told you where it belonged, my dear child."

It seemed very strange to me that he should speak so freely of his lost love. But somehow I could not reproach him in my heart.

"I have one more question to ask you, father," I said,

"and it is this: Can you explain the mysterious affinity that should present a vision of Madelaine Wild to Helen Greenwood?" The question struck him in an unguarded moment and like a barbed arrow it pierced his heart; that poor weak heart whose action was feeble and erratic was throbbing at this moment with suppressed emotion. He gasped for breath; his face was deathly white; and every nerve in his system was tense with agitation. I saw with alarm his speechless anguish and assisted him to his room. I gave him some brandy, and when after some time he revived he asked me what I meant by asking him so strange a question. I related all that Helen had told me concerning her vision. "I am exceedingly sorry that I have caused you any suffering," I said, "but I trust you can explain to me what it all means." He was silent and absorbed in his reflections for a few moments and at length falteringly asked, "How did Helen interpret her dream?" "She thought it an omen of Violette Garland's death," I replied.

He sat a long time in silent meditation. At length he said, with forced calmness, "I cannot tell you the meaning of the dream, for I do not know it, and I dislike anything like superstition. Dreams are a combination of strange vagaries. Your friend Helen's mentality is obviously in a state of sublime exaltation, possibly her transition is very near, God only knows. Is Madelaine dead, I wonder?" he murmured. "Poor Madelaine! poor Madelaine! Are you in heaven trying to undo the wrong I did?" For several minutes we were both silent and then I ventured to ask another question. "Was Madelaine Wild acquainted with Helen's mother?" "She was, Irma, but ask me no more now."

He knew something which he was not prepared to reveal to me — that could be plainly seen. A horrible suspicion took possession of me. Was Helen Greenwood Madelaine Wild's child? Was Helen my half-sister? I could not believe it possible, for my mother had not doubted my father's honor, as bitterly as she hated her rival. Yet the suspicion grew upon me. His heart attacks were so like Helen's, the same strange color overspread both their faces when excited. The suspicion haunted me and I felt it would never leave me unless my father should deny the accusation with his own lips, but I would not think of probing the mysterious matter further today, he had suffered already too much. But why should there be any suffering if he were innocent? My father was surely truthful; he would not tell me a falsehood. If Helen and I were half-sisters, then Helen and Fred were not blood kin. Was that the reason they loved one another more than brother and sister usually do? My mind seemed to be entangled in a web. I wondered what had been, what might have been! Then suddenly the thought occurred to me, might not Madelaine have married for a second husband Mr. Garland; but no, it could not be thus, for my father had said he did not know whether Madelaine were dead or living.

I was convinced that my father alone knew the secret, but I felt it would be indiscreet and futile to lacerate his feelings with any further questions at this time. I remained with him all the forenoon and when we went to luncheon he seemed like himself once more, although he appeared very sad and thoughtful.

CHAPTER VIII

Gerald Strong

IT was Sunday morning, the first of June, the month of roses and brides, when I saw Gerald Strong for the first time. I saw him when the birds were singing and all nature praising God.

Oh the pure rapture of a perfect June day! Oh the delight and inspiration of its early morning! Truly if the soul is capable of great suffering it is also capable of great happiness. I had a taste of heaven that June morning.

I usually attended the Rev. Mr. Greenwood's church, and sat in the minister's pew with Helen. In the early morning I would frequently carry flowers to the church. This morning I took a large bouquet of white roses. I expected to see no one but the sexton, but just as I was entering the church I saw a gentleman approaching from the opposite direction. By some subtle instinct I knew that it was Gerald Strong. Evidently he was out for a walk, but paused and entered the church, for what reason I know not, perhaps curiosity to look within Mr. Greenwood's church, as he was visiting at his house. I was sure that he did not see me as I entered by the side door and he by the main entrance. When he reached the auditorium he removed his hat, slowly walking up one aisle and down another, retiring with bowed head passing out by the same way. I remained in the vestibule until he

had gone but I had seen him long enough to know that he was radiant of countenance while his ease of carriage and manly grace were superb and exceptional. The mystic impression I received came near diverting my mind wholly from my mission to the sanctuary. Leaving the bouquet at the altar I returned to my home as one in a dream. It was a warm resplendent day, and it seemed to me the brightest one that I had ever known. So wonderful and sweet it seemed, its influence would linger with me. Peace like a glorified angel of light seemed to lift me above all supernal things and flood my soul with a sacred charm as I slowly wended my way home.

At breakfast I found my parents pensive as usual. I began to understand that the inharmony in my home had made me morbid in the past, but it should not in the future, I would overcome its influence if possible. A new light streamed into my heart and imparted new strength. When the bells chimed for church I responded to their call with an elasticity of spirits unusual to me.

I found the minister's pew vacant, but soon after being seated there, Fred Garland entered, followed by Helen and Mr. Strong. I received a pleasant glance of recognition from Helen and felt conscious that the gentlemen also bestowed a respectful glance but my eyes were averted. I heard Gerald Strong's voice first in song; it was powerful and full of rich depths of feeling, I thought, dominating with its beauty the flood of song. It was the opening hymn in which the whole congregation joined, but his voice compelled my attention till the last sound died away. I tried to fix my mind on the service but I am sorry to confess it was a failure, my thoughts continually returning to this man. I remem-

bered that he had buried his father, and that his sister was in an insane hospital. He had known deep sorrow. Had he ever learned the sweet sad lesson of loving? I wondered. For sadness is ever mingled with love, as I had begun to learn this very hour.

It was communion day. After the benediction had been pronounced Helen invited me to remain, which I did, as did also Fred and Mr. Strong. Fred and I took no part in the sacrament but I saw Gerald Strong reverently take the bread, and touch the silver goblet to his lips and by his serene and humbled devotion I knew he felt to be in communion with the Christ, and very near the Father. Silently I prayed that I too might some day be worthy of that precious symbol.

At the close of the service Helen introduced us, and we walked together to her home. I saw Fred's baby, and my heart went out to her as it never had to a child before. Her advent into life had brought Gerald Strong to Boston. I had felt from the first that the baby would prove a blessing to me, and she had already. She was sweet and beautiful. "She resembles my mother," said Fred, opening the little case which he always carried with him, and indeed the resemblance was striking. "I am grateful that she so resembles our dear mother," said Helen. "She does not so resemble the one for whom she was named," I remarked, and I was not surprised that she did not. Was Helen Greenwood, Madelaine Wild's child? "I think that my brother might have bestowed a prettier name on his baby," said Helen. "I never fancied my name." Her remark led us to speak of names; those our favorites; and some that none of us liked.

"I never met any one before by the name of Irma,"

Mr. Strong remarked. "I once read a very interesting novel by Auerbach, entitled, 'On the Heights,' and Princess Irma was one of its characters. I remember that I admired her very much. It was a book of great suffering, but the most complete novel I ever read." Had I ever read it? he inquired. No, I had not. But I remembered seeing it in my father's library. I would read it.

It was a quiet Sabbath and as beautiful and sweet as heaven, yet all our hearts were sad thinking of the young wife and mother who was in a far-off hospital, bereft of reason. Her husband and her brother were thinking of her constantly, I had little doubt. None of us attended the evening service and ere the shadows of night had begun to gather I returned to my home. I wanted to be alone with my thoughts.

I proceeded immediately to my room. Crossing it and looking down into the garden below, my eyes rested lovingly on the green grass and beautiful flowers and trees. I looked up at the blue summer sky and watched the sun sink slowly beyond the line of the horizon, watched until distant worlds came twinkling into view; and I was thankful that I was a part of the great universe. I felt that it was a glorious privilege to live. Life is good when one is happy. I felt that I had been waiting all my life for Gerald Strong. Would he love me? I hoped that he might, even as I loved him. For I, "a man-hater," had fallen in love at first sight.

The following morning I entered the library and found "On the Heights," on the fly leaf of which were the initials, "M. I. W." I surmised at once that the book belonged to Madelaine Wild. I wondered what her middle name was. My father entered just then and I

asked him if it was her book, and he said it was.

"And what was her middle name?" I inquired.

"Irma," he said.

So I was named from my mother's rival. My father was a bold man, I thought. Doubtless he named me, and my mother did not know Madelaine's middle name. My poor mother was destroying her life and reason by taking morphine. I would go to her this very day and beg of her to abandon the deadly habit. No time must be lost if I desired to save her. But I found the novel so interesting that I could not leave it. Madelaine had marked several passages here and there, and they all pertained to Irma and the king. When I had finished the story I wondered how far Princess Irma had sinned, and to what extent had Madelaine sinned. Should I ever know? That each one had been guilty of a great wrong and had suffered in consequence, I did not question. In reading the novel I pictured my father the king, and Madelaine the beautiful Princess Irma. Would that my father and mother might be reunited at last as the king and queen were. But alas! I knew that my poor mother had but few elements in her nature like the noble queen, so wronged and sinned against.

Gerald Strong had sympathy with Irma, although she loved the king too well. Was that consistent with his purity? Should I ever find that my father had sinned I would be kind and generous like the queen and love him just the same. I was just beginning to learn the meaning of the word love. How sweet it was. Each one must live his own life and if my father had sinned I knew that God could forgive him. I sincerely hoped my father would explain the mystery he was concealing, and

whatever it was I would not love him less. As I made this resolve I seemed to feel the benediction of divine love rest upon me. I opened my Bible and read many sweet promises.

"Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "In the world ye shall have tribulations, but be of good cheer: I have overcome the world." "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." "Now unto Him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and forever."

The Bible was becoming a precious book to me. I needed all the help which I could obtain to meet the future — the dim, mystical future which is so wisely hidden from our view.

CHAPTER IX

A Tragedy

"MOTHER, I want to have a talk with you. Let us go to your room where we shall not be disturbed," I said one morning as we sat in the pleasant drawing-room. We had just finished breakfast — a gloomy meal as usual. My mother never enjoyed her food and she ate as though it were an unpleasant task.

It was a lovely day, the 17th of June. The sunlight filled the room and rested on my mother's soft, brown hair, and the gentle wind coming in at the windows moved the little curls around her brow. She seemed to be waiting for something and after a few moments' silence, remarked;

"I am expecting Dr. Fuller this morning, but after his visit I will see you in my room, and talk with you, if you desire an interview. But I assure you that I have felt no happier since our last conversation. Your alienation seems greater than it did before I told you the sad story of my life, and I regret telling it."

Her large eyes were so sad and wistful I dared not look into them for I knew that what she said was true. A burning desire to love my mother more arose within me. She had suffered alone for many long years. Hereafter I would cling to her more closely and help her bear the burden of life. I reproached myself for my lack of

sympathy. "Is not blood thicker than water?" But before I could take any comfort with her she must cease to put an enemy in her mouth to steal away her brains. If I could manage to see Dr. Fuller before she consulted him I would implore him to pave the way for my interview with her. When my mother saw his carriage approaching she hurried to her room as usual. I hastened to the hall to answer the bell myself. "Dr. Fuller," I said, hurriedly, after his kindly greeting, "I am going to have a talk with my mother today in regard to the morphine habit. I want to save her life if possible, and I want you to pave the way for my interview." The old doctor shook his head sadly. "She will die ere long or become insane if she does not stop taking the stuff," he said, "but I doubt if she can abandon it. However with your assistance I will make one more strenuous effort to save her."

His visit was a long one and as soon as I had seen him drive away I entered my mother's room.

She was walking to and fro, weeping violently, and wringing her hands. "Great God!" she cried, "that which I feared has come to pass! Oh! how I have dreaded this hour knowing that it would surely come sooner or later!"

"Mother, calm yourself, what is the matter?" I said.

"Oh, you need not pretend that you do not know. It is your work, yours! I have prayed that you might avenge my wrongs and instead of doing so, you live to curse me. You are your father's child. I should have known better than to look to you for sympathy. I seem to hate you, Irma, this morning."

"What have I done, mother?"

"I think that you have influenced Dr. Fuller against

me. He told me this morning that I must give up morphine or die."

"Did he never tell you so before?"

"Yes, many times, and I have always said, 'Let me die,' but he pleaded this morning for your sake. Let death come, the sooner the better, I am not so happy that I care to prolong my life. 'Oh for your child's sake abandon the use of the vile stuff; a madhouse awaits you if you do not,' he said. He knows full well that a madhouse awaits me if I do not continue its use. I must have something to quiet my poor shattered nerves."

"Oh mother, there is something better than drugs to quiet the nerves; why did you ever commence taking morphine?"

"I took it first to kill pain, and afterwards to kill sorrow. Fifteen years ago I had a severe attack of neuralgia in my head, which seemed to reach my brain, the pain was so intense. I was out riding when the attack seized me and I stopped at a drug store. The druggist gave me a few small powders telling me that they were morphine, and must be used according to directions. I did so, and was afforded relief and my mental anguish was transformed to an exaltation of elysian tranquillity, every nerve grew quiet and steady and the sorrow of my heart seemed to melt away. Hope beat high in my breast while under their influence, I saw myself happy in your father's love, I felt serene and peaceful. I builded beautiful castles in the air. I pictured you happily married, and your husband a noble man, and a loving son to me. In imagination I saw grandchildren around me; they clung to me and sat upon my knee. I was a queen in my home and beloved by all."

"But you always disliked children."

"Not when the blood in my veins responds to the subtle action of the drug, then I am a different woman. Everything in nature seems to whisper of love and life and happiness."

"My dear mother, love and life and happiness are all around us and about us, and you might be a queen in your home, and possibly I may sometime marry and have children, verifying the correctness of your agreeable vision. Cannot you realize all this without debasing your God-given intellect with morphine?"

"No, I cannot realize that which does not exist and never could. Morphine tells me lies, I am aware, but they are entrancing and beautiful and I revel in them regardless of the illusion. Still I confess when morphine does not deaden memory, I long for the green fields, the running streams, the foliage and freedom of the woods, and the companionship of the blithesome birds, wild free creatures in nature that used to environ me in the days of my childhood and youth."

"My poor mother, you have suffered much. But you cannot wish your memory to become seared by the use of a drug?"

"Irma, you do not know what you are talking about. Without the drug hope is dead, memory and hope cannot dwell together in my heart."

"Mother, I implore you to cease taking morphine, that which degrades you intellectually, morally and physically, which tells you lies. Why will you not accept the truth, which will lead you by a pleasant path, into a realm of bright sunshine, where love and happiness await you."

My mother shook her head sadly. "It is too late, too

late," she said, "I shall never know happiness, never! There is no hope."

"Do you never think of immortality, mother?"

"I do, indeed, and the thought lies on my breast like lead. I desire to cease thinking forevermore. The Bible tells us that the soul that sinneth shall die. I believe in the death of the wicked. I expect to sink to rest like the beasts, never to awaken. Sometimes I fear it may not be so, but that I shall continue to suffer in the life beyond." The cold drops stood out on her forehead. "I am waiting for death, Irma, though dark and dismal be the descent; let me die, it is the only boon I crave."

The clear sunshine played about us in her room, and I longed to take her in my arms of faith and carry her into the eternal sunshine of God's love. But my faith yet lacked the strength to uplift another. God's law is harmony, and nothing can annul it, but I had not yet clearly solved the simple problem. I felt that underneath were the everlasting arms, but I was myself too much of a novice to lead the way to their restful support and protection.

"Sleep is very tranquilizing," she said. "'He giveth his beloved sleep.' I want to sleep, Irma, pray that God will grant this gift to me: eternal sleep." Then she uttered a wild cry. "Do you think I have not tried to resist the temptation? I have had many a bitter struggle of which you do not know. I have tried to leave off gradually; but such frightful sights have taken possession of me; I have seen myself in imagination carried away from home to a madhouse; I have pictured myself chained to an iron bedstead; I have seen bars upon the windows and heavy bolts upon the door. All these things would happen to

me if they carried me to an insane asylum. Great God! Do not let them drag me away. Promise, Irma, for God's sake promise. Oh, do not let them take me to a madhouse, promise me that they shall not compel me to leave my home."

"My dear mother, I promise you all that you desire," I answered. I had tried to do my duty, but I had not accomplished any good. My heart was sad and heavy, and I felt that I must leave her to God. No harm could really happen to her whatever might befall. "I will never trouble you again," I said, for I pitied her in her weakness. I attempted to kiss her but she motioned me away.

The following day she appeared calm and peaceful. She invited me into her boudoir, and showed me a new rug for her sleeping room which she had recently purchased. "I have also decided that I will have my chamber frescoed again."

I was delighted to find her taking an interest in her surroundings. Then we discussed the colors for the walls and decided on a pale green shade. I invited her to share my room with me while hers was being renovated. I will occupy the couch," I said, "and you may have the bed." She thanked me very kindly, but said she should prefer to go to the next floor and occupy the room adjoining Fanny's. She was quite cheerful, and I suspected that she had taken a large dose of morphine, for her eyes looked dreamy and strange. She was dressed in mauve silk trimmed with velvet, which was very becoming to her. We rode out together in the afternoon, and I played a game of chess with her on our return. After supper she came and kissed me good-night. "Shall I call

Fanny?" I asked. "Oh no, she is in her room, as she is not feeling well. I told her not to come down; I shall find her upstairs. Good-night, Irma, God bless you!" she said and hurried upstairs. These were the last words I ever heard her utter. I have always been thankful for that parting kiss, and those words, "God bless you."

That night my poor mother went to sleep forever, never to awaken to the bitter sorrows of life. She had deliberately put herself to sleep by taking a very large dose of morphine, and then had closed all the windows and doors and turned on the unlighted gas.

Fanny came to my room the next morning expecting to find my mother with me. "Were you not with her last night?" I asked. "No, she had her room frescoed yesterday as you know and she told me that you had invited her to share your room. She asked me if I would not like to go to my own home after supper and remain over night, and of course I was glad to do so. She made me promise to return early this morning. 'Come before Miss Wild arises,' she said."

"I asked my mother to remain with me, but she refused, wishing to be near you upstairs. Fannie, I am terror-stricken! Something has happened: Is my father in his room?"

"No, he has gone for his morning walk."

I feared the worst, and I knew that Fanny did also. "Are you a brave girl?" I asked her. "I am not easily unnerved," she replied.

"Then come with me upstairs."

As soon as we entered the hall we realized what had occurred. The odor of escaping gas was very powerful.

Fanny called the butler before we attempted to enter. I felt that we should find the door locked, but it was not. The butler entered, turned off the gas, and opened the windows. Regarding in consternation for a moment the death scene before him, he hurried away. Fanny and I went in together and for one brief minute I stood beside my mother with her still white face! Then I sank helpless to the floor. God only knows what my heart experienced in a space of time that mortals call a minute.

When I returned to consciousness I was in my own room, and two figures stood by my bed. Helen Greenwood and Gerald Strong were bending over me. I had been unconscious an hour. I could not realize what had happened. I thought I was lying on the sand by the sea, and I could hear the wild waves dashing about me. I tried to speak, but my voice sounded far away to myself.

"Do not attempt to talk just yet, Miss Wild," said Gerald Strong, taking my hand in his. "Underneath are the everlasting arms, let us rest upon them come what will. Do not let us despond but hope that God in His providence may show us His love even in the dark valley of the shadow of death."

"Oh my poor mother has taken her life," I sobbed. "Do not feel that she has taken the life which God gave, she still lives," he gently replied. "Then perhaps she has not ceased to suffer," I exclaimed. I wanted to feel that my poor mother was at rest. "Do not fear, Miss Wild, God is love; just trust Him and calmly wait. He hath a merciful meaning in all the affliction that he visits upon his children. Just pray till you have faith to see and understand."

"Does my poor father know what has happened?" I

asked. "He does not know yet, he has but just returned. If you wish me to, I will break the news to him as gently as possible." "I thank you, Mr. Strong. His heart is weak and troubles him when deeply excited; I feel you will understand how to convey this dreadful intelligence to him far better than many others would." "Be composed, Miss Wild, under God's guidance I shall strive to perform this sad duty discreetly."

He went softly out. Helen had not uttered a word. Her face was pale and I knew she was trying to be calm for my sake. She bent down and kissed me with trembling lips and I knew that her heart was filled with sympathy. "Is my mother with strangers?" I asked, "I must go to her." "No, no," replied Helen, "you are too weak, Irma, I will go to your mother and attend to everything you wish. I always loved her and she seems strangely near to me now that she has passed on."

After bestowing upon me a few thoughtful attentions for my comfort, Helen left me alone in the somber silence of my room and my mind was soon meditating over the mystery of death. Where is my mother, she who kissed me good-night and asked God to bless me only yesterday. Oh, where is she now? My mind was keen and active in my great sorrow. I found myself thinking of that beautiful vision which St. John had of the "tree of life" that grew in the midst of the garden, bearing "twelve manner of fruits and whose leaves were for the healing of the nations." I felt that death was only an open door into a new and beautiful phase of life where my mother would sometime find rest in the activities of heaven. I sank slowly to my knees and with stilled heart and silent lips thanked God for the revelation of his

infinite love.

"Your mother is fair to look upon in death," Helen said when she returned to me. "A happy smile rests upon her face, it is a look she seldom wore in life. Irma, I long to have her back. Did I ever try to make her happy?" "You try to make everybody happy," I answered. "I will try harder in the future than I have in the past for now your mother is gone I feel that I neglected her."

"Where is my father?" I inquired.

"He is with Mr. Strong."

"Will you ask him to come to me?" She went out and soon returned with my father. When he entered my room he was calm and so was I, but Helen wept bitterly. My father put his arms about her and kissed her tenderly. "Poor Helen," he murmured. My father did not kiss me. Did he not realize that my sorrow was too intense for tears? "Have you seen her, father?" I asked. "No, but Helen has told me that she looks calm and perfectly natural," he answered. "Come with me, Helen, I desire to look upon her." "I will go down with you," I said. "No, Irma, you have passed through intense excitement, you must keep very quiet. Come, Helen," he said, as he turned to go.

Hand in hand they slowly went down stairs and together viewed the remains of my departed mother. When they returned to my room he still clung to Helen. I had always known that he was very fond of her, but I had never seen him show it so plainly before, yet I was not jealous, but something assured me that she was his child, and the daughter of Madelaine Wild.

I had always enjoyed Helen's companionship, but her

presence at this time was disquieting to me. I felt sorry when she informed me that my father had requested her to remain with us until after the funeral. I did not think it was in good taste, to say the least. My father is a strange man, I declared mentally. If he knew that I had fathomed his secret he would doubtless be more considerate of my feelings. When he was making arrangements for the funeral he requested that Rev. Mr. Greenwood and family be seated with the mourners. "That will include Mr. Strong and Mr. Garland," he explained," but I desire Mr. Greenwood and his wife to ride in the carriage with my daughter and myself." The undertaker replied that all his wishes would be strictly attended to.

As I pondered on these things it was more than I could endure, and I wept bitterly. At the funeral by some strange chance Helen was the one who sat nearest my mother's casket. When taking leave of her she seemed deeply affected and kissed my mother's brow.

I was thankful for the sweet smile that rested on my mother's lips in death. I longed to hear her say, "I am happy, Irma." My mother was not responsible for her last rash act I was sure. I was sorry that I had not loved her more, and something told me it was partly my own fault. "We shall know each other better when the mists have cleared away." I grieve, but with a heart at peace with God, for I shall meet her and we will walk together beside the River of Life, and my hand shall clasp her hand, "Just over in the Morning-land, O Morning-land! O Morning-land!"

We shall grow in grace faster on the other side than we do here. I believe many Christians will learn in that

home of the soul that they did not deserve the name of Christian here on earth.

The day following my mother's funeral my father came to me with my mother's box of jewels, which were very valuable. "Irma," he said, "I desire Helen Greenwood to have these jewels." "Why do you wish her to have the jewels which belonged to my mother?" I exclaimed in astonishment. "Well, we both love Helen, you know," he remarked. "But my mother was not particularly fond of her," I rejoined. "If she could speak she would ask you not to give them away I am sure." "Helen was very kind to remain with us in the troublous hour of our bereavement. You are not selfish, Irma, I know, and you have an abundance of jewels. I wish Helen to have these."

He rambled on in this fashion until I could endure it no longer. "I shall not give my consent," I said, "and I should not think that you would want Madelaine Wild's daughter to have what belonged to my mother!" He gazed upon me with amazement depicted upon his face. "I do not want Madelaine's daughter to have them," he said in a firm, decisive voice. "Father, is not Helen Greenwood Madelaine Wild's child?" "No, she is not!" he replied. "Father, forgive me, I have wronged you. An evil suspicion had taken possession of me that Helen was your child and Madelaine Wild's." "You are mistaken," he said. "Oh, father, can you forgive me for wronging you so? I am perfectly willing now that Helen should have the jewels. I am sure she will appreciate them; she is fond of diamonds, and she has few of her own. My mother's are beautiful. I am sorry I wronged you, father. You will forgive me?"

"Irma, you have not done me any injustice. I am a greater criminal than you think, but Helen is not Madelaine's child. I have committed a heinous sin in my life. It seems to me that I cannot carry the burden alone much longer. I have prayed for forgiveness, but it has not been granted. The voice of conscience has always whispered, 'Confess your sin and then turn to God for forgiveness.' The longing to confide in some one at times has been so intense I have frequently wished that I was a Roman Catholic so I could go to confession. I think that confession would relieve my pent up emotions.

"Why not confide in me, father? Cannot you trust me?"

"Yes, my dear, I know that I can trust you, and some time in the near future I will reveal all my heart to you. But I cannot do so now. I am too weary, after the excitement of the last few days, to review the past."

"Oh, father, I am sorry that my poor mother was a suicide." "It is sad beyond expression," he said, "but I do not feel she was responsible for the act. The drugs she took had unbalanced her mind, Irma. It does not seem so great a sin to me for her to take her own life after all these years of suffering as it did when she confessed long years ago in her strength and young womanhood, that she had destroyed a life in embryo that had been intrusted to her. *That was the sin which separated us.* It does not seem so terrible to me as it did for her to send me the false message that she was dead."

"Father, speak kindly of the dead, I implore; you must not forget that she was my mother when you speak of her misguided acts. Have you no sorrow for your loss?"

"I am sad, but I have been unspeakably sad all these years, ever since our home was broken. I was not the first to sin, Irma. Of course, I regret that I ever met your mother, for her own sake as much as my own. She might have married some other man and been supremely happy. Irma, if you ever marry, do so for love's sake. Love for its own sake is the supreme endowment of God. I speak from bitter experience."

"Did not my father and mother ever love one another?" I inquired, to lead him on. He smiled but did not reply. It seemed strange to me he should smile, for I felt that my parents were never lovers. But the question seemed to recall fond recollections, and the love light shone in his eyes.

We sat a long time in silence, when I diverted his mind by asking how he liked Mr. Strong.

"He is a great soul, Irma. He came into my life when I needed help. When I discovered what your mother had done I felt that a heavy disgrace had fallen upon our home and inmates. I gave voice to some such sentiment. 'We are disgraced,' I said. I shall never forget Mr. Strong's reply. 'Disgrace only consists in mentally acknowledging disgrace,' he said. Are you interested in Mr. Strong, Irma?"

"I love him," I calmly replied.

"How like *her*," he murmured, and then he walked away as though in despair, leaving me to wonder what he meant. Did he think I was like my mother? Did he think me unwomanly in confessing my love? Did he deem me foolish to bestow it unasked? I did not know. I had been truthful in my answer, that was all.

CHAPTER X

The Science of Sanity

THE days and weeks followed each other in rapid succession regardless of the joys and sorrows of mortals. Sometimes I think there is about an equal amount of rain and sunshine in the life of each person here below.

I saw a great deal of Gerald Strong in Helen's home as he still lingered in Boston, and the better I knew him the more I admired him. His strength of character and wealth of culture ofttimes surprised me, for I had never met another like him. "He is as wise as he is good," I thought. But at last all the beautiful summer fled, and the autumn days were at hand. "I shall return to Seattle the last of October," he said to me one evening. There was a pain in my heart when he made this announcement. We had talked of everything but love, that is, love of a sentimental nature, the love which should exist between lovers. In the broadest sense of the word Gerald Strong was all love. There was not a creature in God's universe in which he did not find some virtue worthy of his love. I craved a lover's love. I was not a man-hater after all. I had only thought that I was because my mother, believing me to be one, had impressed the thought forcibly upon me. Gerald Strong had been the first to awaken love in my heart. I believe that all good men and women crave companionship. Had I

met my soul's affinity? Time would tell sooner or later.

Little Helen grew sweet and cunning we all thought, and her innocent prattle contributed to our social joys. Fred heard frequently from his mother-in-law, but nothing favorable in regard to Violette. She was just the same as when she entered the hospital, Mrs. Strong wrote. How sad it was! But Mr. Strong was hopeful and felt certain that his sister would recover her mind.

One evening when my father was present, Mr. Strong and I were speaking of old age. "I wish I might never grow old," I said. "You never will, Miss Wild, women who are truly beautiful never grow old, but as the years pass they grow interesting and attractive," said Mr. Strong. "About a year after my father died I went abroad," he went on. "I was melancholy; I suffered the most intense mental anguish. My father, whom I dearly loved, was an agnostic. My mother was a good Baptist and I had always attended church and Sabbath-school with her. I was baptized and became a member of the church when I was twelve years old. My father did not interfere; I believe he was glad to have me embrace my mother's faith. He was an upright and kind-hearted man who practiced the Golden Rule, but he seldom attended church. 'I cannot believe,' he declared, 'from whence I came and whither I go is all a mystery.' My mother was exceedingly sorrowful in regard to my father's state of mind.' He was always included in her prayers and she had faith that he would believe before he died. But the light of faith did not come to him, and he passed away without hope in a hereafter. My mother was deeply grieved and mourned continually. A great fear took possession of me that my

kind, loving father was eternally lost; that he would be damned forever and ever. The demon fear clung to me day and night, haunting me continually. My mother advised me to go abroad. She knew that I sorrowed for my father, but she did not know that my anguish and fears concerning him exceeded hers. She thought a change of scene would benefit me, but it did not; the devil went with me; I read the Bible diligently and anxiously, but could find no hope. I believed in the creed of the church, which misled me from the living Christ. I did not then understand the science of mind. I have since learned it and it has brought to me great consolation and peace." His serene deliberation of speech carried the conviction to my heart that he had fathomed a great truth.

"What is the science of mind, Mr. Strong; will you not teach it to me?"

"'Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. As he thinketh in his heart so is he.' In this you have the great central truth.

"In returning home I found the light I was seeking. I met a lady on board the steamer who had lived long enough, I should judge, to be my mother. Yet she was not old and never will be, for she was truly beautiful in Christly attributes. She was reading the ninety-first psalm the first time I saw her; the second time I chanced to meet her I observed that she was reading the same psalm, and I was prompted to go to my room and read it myself. It impressed me as it never had before, and I reread it until I felt something of the inspiration of the psalmist. The following day as I sat near this lady I saw she was reading again the ninety-first psalm. I

decided that she must be a very religious person, and I longed to know her better. It happened that we entered into conversation, and I mentioned the fact that I had observed her reading the ninety-first psalm three days in succession. 'I read it every day,' she said, 'for it is beautiful and true.' 'Do you not believe that all the Bible is true?' I asked.

"'I do not believe that it is correctly understood by all who read it; I believe in a gospel of love.' Then she told me of a dark time in her life. 'I was under a cloud,' she said, 'and I imagined that I had committed the unpardonable sin. I wronged God with my false views of him. He is love; He is truth; He is life and health mentally to all who believe in Him. As soon as we forsake a sin and are truly penitent we are pardoned. No one can be lost because no one can have an existence apart from God.' She spoke the language of love, and I seemed to be lifted to a higher plane of thought. Love was reflected in her face. She dispelled all my fears. I wonder greatly now that I could have ever entertained such absurd views of God. She was a charmingly magnetic woman, and my heart went out to her in sympathy and admiration, and I felt that I became a different man after meeting her. It was an inspiration to be with her.

"She told me that she was acquainted in Boston, and I have thought she might be a relative of yours. Her name was Madelaine Wild."

I glanced towards my father, expecting to see him turn pale, but instead, to my amazement, a new joy, a great hope beamed from his face.

"She is related by marriage," he said. "Madelaine Wild married my favorite cousin. Should you ever dis-

cover that Mrs. Wild had a daughter I presume you would be loving her for her mother's sake," said my father, playfully.

"When I love it will be for love's own sake, not for another's sake," replied Mr. Strong, with some emotion.

So Madelaine was alive and still beautiful. My father was evidently glad to hear the news although my poor mother had died so recently. My father was a strange man and a willful one. I was certain he still loved Mrs. Wild. Well, I shall always love Gerald Strong, I thought. The years may come and go, but I shall never change. I was like my father in this respect — intense in my love.

The last day of October came all too soon. Mr. Strong came and said good-bye to me. "May I write?" he asked. He made no declaration of love, but he pressed my hand when we parted, and remarked that aside from his deep sorrow regarding his sister he had, in a certain way, spent the happiest summer of his life. "When my sister recovers," he said, "I shall come for Fred and little Helen. Meanwhile, will you love the little one for my sake?"

"My heart is already drawn to her by some mystic influence," I replied, with deep feeling, "and your request will be held in sacred regard."

A glad light came into his eyes, as he pressed my hand a moment in silence and then he went away. With his departure the sun ceased to shine. All was dark. Come back! Come back! was the cry of my heart. Yes, he was gone, and my heart was desolate. While he tarried with me and I could look into his face I felt that he returned my love. It is so hard to believe when one

loves another that one's love is not reciprocated. But now that he was away from me and I recalled all that had passed between us, turning it all over and over in my mind, I was certain of but one fact: I loved him. I loved him deeply. Life would be a burden to me without his presence. I longed for him to come back and tell me that he loved me. Would he write to me? And if he did what would his letter contain? I must wait and hope.

I was a constant visitor at Helen's. We adored her sweet little dimpled niece. My father ofttimes accompanied me; he was also delighted with baby Helen. But all our hearts ached for the unfortunate young mother so cruelly separated from her precious gift. Helen seldom mentioned Mr. Strong. She had no heart or eyes for any one but her brother and the little one. Her brother was doubly dear to her now that he was so sorely afflicted. I wonder if she guessed my secret, for it is natural for one to mentally dwell on what is in one's heart. But Helen was not interested in Gerald Strong. I began to think as the weeks dragged away he would not even write to me — that he had merely asked me if he might do so on the impulse of the moment. With all my faith and trust I was unhappy. I daily prayed that God might give me my heart's desire. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." This tide of love seemed to carry me off my feet. I must take a much firmer hold of Christ, the solid rock. "The kingdom of heaven is within," and I ought to dwell there, even if my fears are realized and Gerald Strong does not love me.

CHAPTER XI

A Letter and a Dream

MY long looked for letter came at last. It ran thus:

MISS WILD,
Boston, Mass.

MY DEAR FRIEND: —

I have just come from the hospital where my poor sister is being treated for insanity. She did not know me. It is sad beyond anything I have ever known heretofore. Of all the mysteries I have ever tried to solve the problem of insanity is the hardest. I would gladly give my life to restore my sister to her normal condition if such a sacrifice were possible to restore her. There is no ancestral taint of insanity in our family. A leading physician assured me that it was incident to childbirth and not hereditary. I am thankful, for I had rather die than ever lose my reason. My dear sister is separated from all her friends but she does not realize it. Still, I know that there is light beyond, and I have faith we have only to wait patiently and she will be restored to us.

Irma, may I not call you by that dear name, I miss you more than words can express. I live over again in felicitous imagination the happy days, weeks, and months which we passed together. It meant more to me than any other friendship in my life, for this reason: I love you, Irma. I longed to make this confession while I was with you, but I wanted you to decide calmly and clearly away from my personal presence this question of life. Do you return my love, Irma? I loved you from

the first and I sincerely hope that you return my affection. I feel that my life would be one long weary voyage without your companionship, and I should be eager to reach the other shore, but with you by my side, dear Irma, the inevitable vicissitudes of life would be softened and its pleasures immeasurably heightened. It would be my ambition to make our existence a continuous pleasant dream. I should never care to awaken from this dream of life, were you by my side, until the glorious realism of heaven itself dawned upon our spiritual vision. Yet, I would be inspired to so live that when the awakening came I should be prepared for it. These poor words but feebly convey the surging flood of affection that goes out to you from my throbbing heart. I continually hunger for your gentle and precious companionship. Permit me, I pray you, to address your father and ask him to give me my heart's treasure, his own dear daughter? Now, let your heart speak, Irma. If you can bring yourself to love me will you become my wife? I hope that you may see your way to give me a reciprocal response. I shall be impatient to learn my fate. You will not keep me in suspense. Whatever your decision may be, I subscribe myself,

Your lover, now and forever,
GERALD STRONG.

My love! My love! Light and harmony filled my soul. I thank God that he ever gave such a noble soul to love me. I could say with Fred Garland, "He is the whitest man I ever met," and he loves me! Not in the impassioned way that I love him, perhaps. His nature is serene and grand. There is much that is above and beyond me which he loves. He loves divine principle more than he does me. I hope he always will. My cup of joy was full. I knew that his love was unlike any other love which had been offered me. I realized that

it was unselfish. Our union would be one of mind. Down through all the ages men and women had married, but ours would be the true union. I must be pure and holy; I would prepare myself to become his bride. How blessed it would be to think of him, today, tomorrow, and the day after, always as my lover! Forever and forevermore. I should think of my love, and live for him.

Not today would I tell my father of my joy; the secret should be wholly mine for one brief day at least. It was the happiest day I had ever known. I remained in my room with his letter in my hand and revelled in my happy thoughts. The shadows of night gathered around me, and then it grew very dark, but my soul was flooded with sunshine. I had found my heaven here on earth. This life was good enough for me and always would be. And then I thought however pleasant the journey of life might be it must end some time and Gerald and I might not travel all the way together. One might grow weary and fall asleep and the other would have to journey on alone. Which one would it be? and my spirit faltered. "Did I love my idol too well?" I wondered. If Gerald were here he would cast out fear, that cruel monster that would rob me of my new-found joy. He says that fear is the devil. He knows that perfect love which casteth out fear. I will listen for the still small voice; I will strive to learn the meaning of love, the love that casteth out fear from the human heart. It was quite late when I retired and I fell asleep praying that I might be guided by Truth. All love is from God, I thought. But my new-found joy was so great that I was a little perplexed. I felt sure that I should dream of Gerald Strong, but I did not, I dreamed of my mother.

I thought that I stood in Heaven before the great white throne of God, near Christ, but His brightness dazzled me. I could not look upon His face, although I felt the glory of His presence. I was bewildered. What to do or what to say I knew not. An angel hastened to my side. "Is my mother here?" I hopefully asked. "Come," was the reply, "follow me."

I will not attempt to describe Heaven as I saw it in my dream; it would be impossible. A transcendent glory of bewildering radiance and beauty illumined every vista and bathed every scene. I gazed upon celestial beings that would never cease to live and rejoice; I saw beautiful flowers that would never wither nor fade; I beheld bright fruit that would never decay. I saw that all was perfect in the mansion nearest the throne, but the angel led me through many mansions, and they were not all equal in brightness and glory, yet all were happy; each one seemed willing to be least in the Kingdom of Heaven. Each countenance reflected that sweet peace and joy that passeth all understanding; and all seemed devoted to one another. With longing eyes I sought for the presence of my mother as the angel led me on. My guide beckoned to other angels and they joined us. Those shining ones who had been transfigured, sang as we walked.

At length we came to a place where men were toiling. "Do they labor in Heaven?" I asked. And the angel by my side replied, "Do you not behold?" "But why do they labor?" "Many wealthy people on earth fail to find the happiness which they seek," was the response. "They grow to envy the poor, because they realize that some of them have found what money cannot buy; they

feel destitute when they enter Heaven stript of their possessions and with their spirituality undeveloped, so they desire to labor. It is for them a pleasurable progression, this wish to achieve something. By and by they will cease to labor as you behold them now, and pass on to a higher plane — a brighter mansion." "Then the veil must be very thin between earth and Heaven!" I exclaimed. The angel smiled.

At length I saw that we were near the great Portal of the Eternal City. My vision was intensified; I could see through spaces inconceivable. I caught the sheen of multitudes and I heard voices that called and answered from afar. My soul was filled with music. I wished that I was there to remain forever, for I shall never be satisfied with earth, I thought, after this glimpse of glory. I gazed with joy upon the happy throng around me, then I looked far away and saw still another Paradise gate.

Could it be possible that my poor mother was outside the gate? Had she not gained entrance into this beautiful land of peace and contentment? "Is not my mother here?" once more I asked. Ere the angel had time to answer, my heart suddenly thrilled by the glorified presence of her whom I sought, pure as the light, and beautiful as the morning. She was clothed in spotless white and on an opalescent halo that encircled her brow in iridescent letters I descried the word "Love." I attempted to approach her, but my angel guide waved me back with her glistening wand. I saw that there was an inscription on every halo, and in some there were stars of dazzling brightness and beauty, but there were none in my mother's ethereal crown. On one crown of the seraphic

beings about me was the inscription: "Suffering"; on another "Faith"; on another "Hope"; on another "Charity"; the last transcendently and indescribably enchanting. Some were very beautiful and some seemed unlovely to me. I inquired of the angel what those words signified, and she replied: "Each legend is a mark of merit for the one who wears it. It tells to all the inhabitants of Heaven why each soul has been found worthy to enter here." "My mother suffered," I said, wondering why that word did not appear in her crown of life. "Her love was greater than her suffering. All who have ever lived have loved and all have suffered. But the most worthy attribute which each soul reflected on earth is the one inscribed in the crown bestowed upon them here," explained the angel. "I did not realize that my mother possessed great love, but I am glad to know that she is here," I said, "but I am surprised that she should appear so happy." "You never knew your mother," answered the angel. "Love rules Heaven and things are not ordered here as they are on earth. Your mother is confidently waiting for some one."

I looked far beyond the golden gates and I saw the beautiful border land between Heaven and earth. Among the foremost in the advancing throng I saw the form of a woman approaching the river of death, and all the attending angels sang a song of welcome. I saw that one held a dazzling crown filled with stars and bearing the inscription "Truth." My mother smiled and waited, and the woman crossed the shining river without fear, as Christ once walked the sea of Galilee. Her hair hung loosely about her and her arms were outstretched; her face was turned from me. My mother, and the

angel who bore the beautiful crown, vanished for a moment from my vision and then reappeared attending this newly transfigured one in whom their interest centered. My mother stretched out her arms to the new arrival and clapsed her in a fond embrace. Then the angel who was my guide, said to me gently, but to my unutterable distress, "You must return to earth." "How shall I return?" I tremblingly asked, for I looked across the river of death that the woman had walked so fearlessly over and I felt that I could not return that way. "You will go as you came, in a dream," said the angel. And while she was lifting the mystic veil for me to pass through I cast an imploring look back at my mother and I saw the sweet beatific face of the being she held to her breast.

It was Helen Greenwood.

I awoke, strangely impressed with my vision. It was morning, the darkness and silence of the night were gone, and while I rejoiced in the sunshine of another day I could not but dwell upon the mysterious scenes that environed me in slumber. I could hear voices in the street below. I could hear the sound of footsteps hurrying along, some on one mission and some on another, but in all the world not a soul was happier than I. My dream made a deep impression upon me. Never again would I think of my poor mother as being unhappy. It was only a dream; but it convinced me that she was in Heaven and that Helen Greenwood would one day be her welcome companion in the realm of Glory.

CHAPTER XII

Blood Tells

I AROSE and dressed myself carefully, wearing my prettiest breakfast gown. I reread Gerald's letter, and then I stepped out into the new day with my new-found joy. My father greeted me with a kiss. He had been very loving and tender since my mother died. I saw that the knowledge that Madelaine Wild was living had made him very happy.

"You received a letter from Mr. Strong last evening, did you not, Irma?"

"Yes, father, and you will soon hear from him. He expressed himself very tenderly to me and has asked me to become his wife."

"And are you happy, dear, with this proposition?"

"Happier than the angels in heaven, father."

And then I recalled my dream and related it to him. He was deeply moved. "I hope Bernice has found happiness at last," he said. "I hope that she will find the joy of loving, as she never loved on earth." "She did love on earth, she loved you!" I exclaimed. "She had a very singular way of showing her affection," said my father. I was shocked. "Father," I said, "remember that she was my mother." He smiled, but showed no inclination to prolong the subject. I knew that he and my mother were very inharmonious, but I had supposed that he would mourn for her somewhat, and perhaps feel

some remorse that he did not succeed in making her life happier. His manner in this connection was extremely displeasing to me. I did not care to converse with him in regard to my own happiness. "So you will marry Mr. Strong and leave me all alone," he said, after some time. "No, father, you must come with us," I warmly exclaimed. "What, go to Washington to live? That is a little too far from dear old Boston to suit my fancy."

"Mr. Strong is charmed with Seattle, and you might after a little regard that city in the same favor and be as happy there as you are here," I remarked. After a few minutes of abstraction he added, "Strange things sometimes happen. Perhaps I shall marry again, who knows? Just think of it, an old chap like me," he said playfully. I felt pained that he could speak thus lightly. Was my father losing his mind? Perhaps his sorrow was greater than I had thought and it had unbalanced him. He must have seen an expression of amazement in my face, for he continued quite seriously, "Irma, the heart never grows old."

"Father, my mother has been dead only a month."

"You must not forget, Irma, that I thought she died more than twenty years ago."

"But you were soon informed of your mistake."

"Yes, when it was too late!" he exclaimed bitterly.

"Why too late?" I asked with much concern. "Because I had married again, as I thought."

"Married again?"

"Yes, Irma, four weeks after the letter came telling me that my wife was dead and buried, just four weeks from that day Madelaine Wild and I were married."

I was speechless from astonishment. My father continued: "Two weeks following our marriage I received a letter from my wife containing the tidings that she was alive, and had willfully deceived me. What could I do?" "Was it not a wicked thing to marry so soon even if my mother had been dead?" I asked. "You must have loved Madelaine Wild while my mother was still living," I said reproachfully.

"Whatever may have been our reciprocal feelings not one single word or act ever passed between us that might not be approvingly recorded in Heaven. The sacred bond of marriage I have ever held inviolate and unchastity even of thought is one of the most revolting sins to my nature. A sin I have never been guilty of, and Madelaine was pure as snow; but we should have conformed to the social proprieties and waited a while longer. We both confessed to this error later, as I do now again. We were married in secret and went to the sunny South to enjoy our honeymoon. No one knew that we were together with the exception of our kind friends, Mr. and Mrs. Garland, with whom we were staying. When we returned to Boston we intended to announce our marriage, but my wife's letter was forwarded to me." My father told me this with deep emotion and inquired if I cared to hear more.

"Tell me all, father, I implore. I have known there was a deep mystery in your life and I am thankful to have it explained." He continued: "Since a severe illness many long years ago while I was in school, I have been subject to attacks of heart trouble, as you know. When I received my wife's letter I fell dead, as they all thought for some time.

"Mr. Garland was an old schoolmate of mine, my boon companion in college days. He married about the time I did, a southern girl, and went to Tennessee to live. He was Fred Garland's father." "Were Fred and Helen born at that time?" I asked. "Fred was," he replied. "Mr. Garland was with me when I received the letter. With the assistance of his wife they managed to carry me to the house. We were out together when the letter came and Madelaine stood by my side. I was the happiest man in the world one minute and the next the most hopeless. Madelaine was frantic. They tried to restore me to consciousness, but gave up in despair, and sent for a physician. At first he declared me dead, but finally decided that life was not wholly extinct. 'He must live!' cried Madelaine. For weeks my life hung by a thread, and when I had regained my reason I found that my beautiful Madelaine had fled from me. My friends told me all that had transpired during my unconsciousness, and I told them the contents of the letter I had received and explained to them how cruelly I had been deceived. Madelaine had read the letter, and as soon as the doctor had pronounced me out of danger she quietly went without telling any one.

"She left a little note for Mrs. Garland and one for me. Neither of them were sad nor dismal. To me she wrote: 'Take your wife back to your heart and home, and make her happy. If you love me grant this my last request, and do not grieve for me. We must never meet again. Madelaine.'

"I sought her by day and by night, but I could not find my darling. She went to England where she had relatives and I failed to get any trace of her.

"In process of time my wife wrote to me that I had a daughter, and she commanded me to come at once and make proper provision for the care of my child else she would put her away somewhere. If I was sad and embarrassed by my unhappy circumstances I certainly had no disposition to shirk my responsibility and I went for the little innocent infant. Oh, how she cried during the journey home! She was a feeble child. I brought her to my home and employed a nurse, but the poor little thing did not thrive. The doctor advised a change of climate. I thought of Mrs. Garland, a noble, sweet woman, and without ever writing, I took my second trip to Tennessee. Mr. and Mrs. Garland possessed only moderate means and I offered her a generous sum to take care of my baby for a few months.

"I was pining for Madelaine, and I hired an expert detective, who after some months gained information concerning her. She had returned from England and was in a maternity hospital in Boston. I found her at last with a little infant at her breast. Oh, Irma, you think that my unfortunate wife knew sorrow, but I did not know that mortal could live and suffer as Madelaine did. She was wasted to a mere shadow of her former self. 'I am lost! I am lost!' was the burden of her cry. 'Oh, what will become of my precious babe? My sweet little one who had no right to be born?'

"She did not reproach me, not one word of reproach against any one but herself. She took all the blame, as great natures do. The doctors feared that she would lose her reason. 'What can I do, George? What can I do? I am ruined in the sight of God and man!' she cried in her anguish. I tried to reason with her, but she

would not listen to me. 'We will go to England,' I said, 'and seek seclusion and be happy together.' 'No, no; then we shall surely be lost in God's sight if we sin willfully,' she replied. 'I will come and take the baby,' I said. 'I know of some one who will take care of it and adopt it as their own.' 'Who is it?' she asked. 'Mrs. Garland, in Tennessee, where we were when you fled from me,' I said. 'Oh, I did not know what else to do when I found that I was not legally married to you, and so I fled. When my condition became known to me I was almost insane.' 'Why did you not let me know?' I asked. 'I wanted you to be true to your wife, and forget me,' was the reply. 'Oh, I love my baby; our baby, George. How can I part from her? Oh, I hoped that God would take us both, baby and me. Why did he spare our lives? Would we had died together.'

"'Keep your baby,' I implored, 'I will see a lawyer. Perhaps something can be done so that I can make you my legal wife.'

"And then I told her that my wife had given birth to a little girl, and I had taken her home; but I did not tell her that I had since taken her to Mrs. Garland. 'Your wife will come back to you some day, George, and I pray that you may be happy together. I do not want to part with my child, but if it is best that I should do so I will try to be reconciled to this ordeal. I will not be selfish, but our baby must never know that its father and mother were not legally married. Will Mrs. Garland keep the secret?'

"'Yes, I am sure that she will, and I will have them come to Boston to live near me, where I can watch over the baby myself, in a measure.'

"This assurance greatly pleased her. When Madelaine's baby was one month old I went for it. Her anguish was heart-rending. The doctor's eyes were filled with tears, and the nurse wept bitterly. Madelaine prayed over the little one and covered it with kisses; but she could not give it up. She wanted me to have it, but she could not part with it. 'I fear her reason will be dethroned,' the doctor said aside to me. He discreetly administered a sleeping potion to her. While she slept I departed with the child for Tennessee.

"When I arrived there I told Mr. and Mrs. Garland the whole sad story. They were very kind and sympathetic. There they were at last, the two babies, half-sisters, and only three months difference in their ages.

"Mr. and Mrs. Garland had become exceedingly fond of the elder little one I had left in their care. I found her in perfect health. Both babies were beautiful, one with blue eyes and sunny hair; the other with brown eyes and brown curling hair. I loved them both; but my heart went out to the child of the woman whom I loved best, and who so naturally and trustingly loved me."

"But you told me," I said, "that Helen Garland was not Madelaine Wild's child."

"Wait quietly until I finish my story," said my father. "The first child which I carried south I told Mrs. Garland she might name, for I had no heart to do so, and my wife had not named her. Mrs. Garland named her Helen. Madelaine's child I named Irma, for her mother, whose name was Madelaine Irma."

My brain seemed to reel. I was surprised beyond measure; I could not speak. My father continued: "I brought little Irma home with me. In about three years

my unhappy wife returned. She never suspected the deception that I had practiced. After all she never knew what a reprobate I really was. I also deceived Madelaine, your mother, for she believed that I left her little one with Mr. and Mrs. Garland. She would have been no happier had she known the truth, that her child was in my own home. I gave Mr. and Mrs. Garland a large sum of money for the service they rendered me. They loved Helen very dearly and when she was less than a year old they came to Boston to live. When Mrs. Garland's mother was dying in England, they were sent for, and during their voyage there were lost at sea, as you already know. Now, no one on earth knew my secret but myself. I have felt keen remorse all these long years, but since my wife died I have ceased to sorrow over the past. I want to find your mother and make her my lawful wife if she will let me. Will you help me in my search for her?"

I could not reply for my heart was too full. What my father had told me seemed so strange to me, so unreal. Could it be possible that Bernice Wild was not my mother! No wonder that I was not a man-hater. My parents devotedly loved one another. I could understand now why there was no more sympathy between my father's wife and myself. "Blood is thicker than water," say what we will. My brain was dazed, congested with the flood of thoughts incident to my troubled youth that crowded upon me and it is hardly strange that I became greatly agitated and hysterical.

At last I dried my eyes. "Father, I shall never be happy until we find my mother," I said. "We must search for her until she is found. When did you last

hear from her?"

"I have not seen nor heard one word concerning her, with the exception of what Mr. Strong told us, since I left her in the hospital asleep, over twenty years ago." "Why do you not advertise?" I asked. "I have contemplated doing so and will move in the matter this very day, and I will also procure the service of a skilled detective to help find her," he said. And at night I was made glad with the assurance that he had promptly set these agencies in action. But the days went by and no news was obtained concerning my mother. How eager my father was, and I was equally anxious to behold the beautiful Madelaine, my own mother. Two weeks had passed and I had not replied to Mr. Strong's letter.

One day I promised myself that I would surely write. That very day I received another letter from him. He wrote as follows:

DEAR MISS WILD:—

My heart hungers and is all but famishing to see you or hear from you. I wrote to you some time ago, and I fear you did not receive it. I shall register this to make sure that it reaches you.

Yours sincerely,
GERALD STRONG.

Yes, I would write to my lover and tell him everything, if my father would give his consent. I would not marry him unless he knew my whole life, every hope, every ambition, every aspiration of my heart; and he should know all the circumstances concerning my birth.

I hurried to my father and asked his permission to tell Mr. Strong all he knew about my mother. He cheerfully

gave his consent and said: "Perhaps Mr. Strong will be able to assist us in a way. He saw her long years since I have and he would probably know her were he to see her again." That day I answered Gerald's letter, opening my whole heart to him. Do not smile, kind reader; if you never were so intensely in love as I am, you may have never found your ideal. I had found mine, and wrote him thus:

MR. GERALD STRONG,
Seattle, Washington.

MY DEAR MR. STRONG: —

The happiest day of my life was the day I received your letter, for I love you. I loved you the very first time I saw you; I loved you before I met you. I have always loved you, for you are my ideal. Oh, happy is the woman who has a grand and noble ideal, and finds him here on earth, clothed in flesh, and knows that he belongs to her and that she belongs to him and may walk beside him evermore. Yes, I have looked into the eyes of my ideal. I thank God that he sent you to me, and that you love me. Oh, my dear, the greatest joy that I could imagine would be to stand with you before the altar; but before you even pledge yourself to me you must know the great change that has come to me since I saw you. In the sight of man I am an illegal child. The woman who died, my father's wife, was not my mother. My parents were not legally married, and I really had no right to be born. Now do you turn away in dismay and horror? If you do, you have not found your ideal. Let me explain. At a certain time my father and his lawful wife separated, after which he received news of her death and burial. He had every reason to believe the information to be authentic. He soon after married his cousin's widow, Madelaine Irma

Wild, she whom you met on board the steamer when you returned from Europe. I am her daughter. They had been married but two weeks when my father received a letter from his wife. He fell prostrate to the ground from the shock, and his life hung by a slender thread for several weeks. When he had recovered my mother, who had learned the dreadful circumstances, was gone. He did not find her for nearly ten months, and when he did find her he found me also. Meanwhile his legal wife had given birth to a daughter which she desired her husband to take. It was a puny child and he carried it to the sunny South for its health, and left it there with dear friends by the name of Garland. These foster parents named the child Helen.

Soon after my birth my father took me there also, as my mother felt that she could not meet the cruel world with her unlawful child. But my father did not leave me with Mrs. Garland; he brought me back to his home. My mother believed that I was left there, and still thinks that Helen Greenwood is her child. Despite my misfortune of birth, I have ceased to blame any one for these conditions. My father related his bitter experience to me the day after I received your letter. He has not heard one word concerning my mother since he took me from her at the hospital, with the exception of what you told us. My mind was so distracted by the facts my father related to me, that I have been too unnerved to write before. My father wishes all that I have confided to you to be kept a profound secret. He has suffered years of remorse, and a confession would do no good now, he says. Of course, you will understand after reading this, that Fred and Helen are not related by any tie of blood, while Helen and I are half sisters. How surprised Fred and Helen would be if they knew the truth! Would their feelings change toward one another, do you think? I shall be very anxious to hear from you again. I have written with unreserved frankness and am fully aware that the information I have

imparted will be an embarrassing test of your affection, but as I am in no way responsible for the circumstances of my birth I leave my fate and future happiness in your hands and heart without any special pleading, but trustingly abiding in your decision.

Your sincere friend,
IRMA ELAINE WILD.

It is not agreeable to a proud man to find his weaknesses exposed. It cut my father to the quick that Mr. Strong must know of his deception. It was several weeks before I could make up my mind to visit Helen. She was the soul of truth and honor, and to look into her pure eyes and remember that she had been deprived all these years of a mother's love, something that she had longed for always, the thought was distressing to me. But I could not reproach myself as I was in no way to blame. I felt too that it would be wrong to reproach my father who had suffered so long from self-condemnation. I had thought (at times) in the recent past that I could not love Helen more, but now a tender sympathy for her was daily developing greater than I had ever known before.

My father was very sensitive now that I knew his secret. We continued to visit Helen, but we never went together and we both did all within our power to make her happy.

Dear sister, could you have read our hearts you would have marveled. I told her of Gerald's letter, and of his declaration of love for me. "But of course you do not care for him," she said, and when I confessed that I adored him she was greatly surprised. The thought that we cared for each other had not entered her mind.

"I thought that you were a man-hater, Irma." "Perhaps I am," I said, laughing, "but you must know that Gerald is a god! and we all have our idols. Do you not remember what Fred wrote concerning him?"

"Dear Fred, he is so good himself that he sees goodness reflected in everyone else," she answered.

"Are you not glad for me, Helen, that I love and am beloved at last?"

"Certainly, dear, I am glad for you, but oh, so sorry for myself, for I suppose that Mr. Strong will carry you away to Seattle, and I shall be separated from you. Oh, Irma, it will be a keen sorrow to me. You are dearer to me than any one on earth with the exception of my brother. How I long to behold him happy once more, but he never can be while his wife is confined in an insane asylum. It is hard to think of her among strangers all the time. I have begged him to remove her and bring her here. I would gladly take care of her with the assistance of a nurse, but the doctors advise him to leave her where she is. Poor Violette, I think of her continually, and I know that Fred does. I often see his eyes fill with tears when he does not know that I am observing him. Sometimes I think that life is all a dream, and by and by when we awaken to the real life and tell our Heavenly Father all that we have suffered here, He will feel sorry that His children have had such unpleasant dreams. I have many times heard children relate to their parents frightful dreams that had harried them the night before. I have experienced such dreams myself and have been so glad to awake and find it all a dream. Irma, I am convinced every day that this life is not the real life. Your mother's death affected me strangely.

She suffered so intensely that she was unwilling to live. She was never happy. Since she died I have wished that I had visited her more frequently, and had tried to be a comfort to her in some way." I could not reply, so she continued to comment on the vicissitudes of life. "I wish that Violette might pass on if she cannot recover, for insanity is far worse than death. If she recovers we will have to part with little Helen, and I have become so fondly attached to her it would be a bereavement which it seems to me I could never endure. Oh, Irma, why were we called into existence to taste a drop of happiness, drink deep of the cup of sorrow, and then die?" "Helen, you are getting morbid!" I exclaimed. "Perhaps I am, Irma, have we not had a good deal of late to make us sad?" she asked. "We certainly have," I replied, and I felt that she censured me in her heart for repining so little for the woman she thought was my mother. She must never know the strange story; it would be cruel for her to know it now; yet I longed for my own mother to know that I was her child. What a tangled web life is!

CHAPTER XIII.

Reclaimed

TWO months more had glided away, and Christmas, merry Christmas, is with us once more Three times each week I receive a letter from my betrothed. Three times each week I write to him. Life is worth living; love makes me satisfied with it. He begs me to be married next Easter, but I cannot bring myself to consent. I want my father made happy before I leave him for the far West. Since Gerald has learned that I am the daughter of "beautiful Madelaine Wild" his protestations of affection have redoubled.

"It was she who taught me that Heaven is love, and hell is fear," he writes. "Yes, we will seek her, and I am sure that we will find her. We will try to make her darkened life radiantly beautiful. I am glad that I met her on my return home from Europe, for I should recognize her at once were I to see her again. What a heavy burden your father has carried all these years! Verily, the way of even the innocent transgressor is hard. Irma, sometimes I feel prompted to leave my business and go out into the world among men who have sinned and suffered, and teach them the truth. I long to help them bear the burden of life; for my heart goes out in sympathy to all. I love the workers and the toilers, those who have been successful, and the unfortunate. I believe in the brotherhood of man, and I would be a brother to

all; for I know my own heart and ofttimes realize that the paths trodden by the good and the bad are so intermingled and so frequently cross one another that each at times becomes common to both. I have again visited my sister at the hospital. She is no better. She is like a sweet and innocent child not capable of taking care of herself. The mystery of mysteries is insanity, and how little thought I ever gave to the insane before my sister lost her reason. We have nothing to be proud of, nothing that we may not lose any hour. But God is good, and I still see the light beyond. I do not despair, but the black cloud of insanity that has cast its deep shadow on our household can never be effaced from my memory. Let us never murmur so long as we possess our reason. Yet no one is entirely sane. Christ was the only sane man who ever lived, and the nearer we are like him the nearer sane we are."

How I love his letters, and the grand sentiments they express. My heart beats to his every word.

On Christmas evening Fred Garland received a telegram from the hospital where Violette was confined. It contained these words: "Come at once. There is a great change in your wife." It was signed by the superintendent of the hospital. Fred was at the church when the telegram came, as they were enjoying Christmas trees in the vestry. He was holding little Helen in his arms and he nearly dropped the child, he was so agitated. He started for Washington on the midnight train. We all felt the deepest solicitude, but we were all very hopeful, but Helen, that it was a change for the better. Her heart was much cast down with fearful forebodings.

"I think that Violette will die," she said, "but that will be far better than to have her live bereft of her reason."

Sweet little Helen grew lovelier every day. We all adored her, and but for her inherent sweetness of disposition, she was in danger of being almost spoiled by our attentions after her father went home. Helen seldom lost sight of her for a minute.

In a few days Helen received a telegram from Fred, containing just six words. They were these: "She is restored. God be praised!" How happy we all were with this blessed intelligence. Helen poured out her heart in thanksgiving. It was pathetic to hear her talk about her mother to little Helen who, of course, had no realization of the precious blessing in store for her.

"Dear little Helen," she said, "we have had good news. You are to know your mother, precious one! You are not to live motherless as your auntie has. You will not have to yearn for a mother's love, and no one to answer. Little one, I would have tried to be like a mother to you, but no one can fill a mother's place."

"Oh, Irma," she said, turning to me, "you little know how hungry I have always been for a mother's love. When I have seen young girls and their mothers happy together I have especially longed for a mother. How often have I thought of that still face at the bottom of the sea, and I always shudder when I survey the sea because it swallowed up my father and my mother. Had they rested where I could have visited their graves, and placed flowers upon them as other girls do who have lost their parents, it would have been some satisfaction, but even that consolation was denied me. The sound of the

wild waves has the greatest horror for me, the sight of the ocean makes me shrink in terror. While my uncle lived I felt that I had some one to lean on who had a fatherly affection for me, but that could not take the place of a mother's love. Not only for myself have I mourned, but for my dear brother's sake. How I have watched over him that he might not be led into sin. How I have loved him that he might not miss anything out of his life. He says that I have been both father and mother to him, and have saved him from himself."

Grief has a strange power in opening the hearts of those who sorrow in common, and the same may be said concerning joy. We all rejoiced together that Violette's reason was restored to her. "Violette will be your sister some bright day, as she is mine now. Won't that make us sisters?" Helen said. "We are sisters, Helen, almost twin sisters."

We were all very gay and cheerful, although Helen disliked the thought of parting with baby. In due time she received a letter from Fred saying that he found Violette almost perfectly well and that they should start for Boston in a few days, for Violette could hardly contain herself she was so eager to see her little one. "What a happy reunion we will have!" exclaimed Helen.

"It is always darkest just before day."

The new year was only two weeks old when Mr. and Mrs. Fred Garland arrived in Boston. Helen asked me to be there to receive them with her, and I was just as impatient to behold Violette as Helen was. I was impressed with the fact that I was to meet my future sister-in-law and upon her arrival I found her simply charming. Not lofty and grand like her brother, but bright and gen-

tle. Could it be that her sweet voice had ever uttered aught but words of reason? She was perfectly delighted to be with us all, but little Helen was the chief attraction. Violette brought me a beautiful gift from her brother. It was a large-sized oil painting of himself. She knew of our engagement and already greeted me with sisterly affection. Fred regarded his wife as a lost jewel restored to him. He was so tender, thoughtful, and constant in his watchful care of her that I was impressed how great indeed had been his anguish and suffering during her living death.

Of course Violette was very weary from her long journey, and my call was a short one, but I promised to spend the following day in Helen's home. Gerald's picture had been taken to my apartments and I hastened there to gaze upon it unobserved. It was a perfect likeness and I silently studied and admired with thrilling joy the nobility of character it portrayed. The following day I spent at Helen's, the day after they were all with me, and so we visited back and forth, happy as the larks in June singing their pæans to the blue bending sky.

It was several days before Violette mentioned to us her illness, but one day when we were all together, and the snow was beating against the window pane, she spoke of herself, and all she had experienced. She made it all so real that it seemed to me after she had finished that I had myself been an inmate of an insane asylum.

She said that her sickness seemed like a long pleasant dream.

"I was a little child again sitting in the sunshine, playing with my dolls, and kneeling again at my mother's knee and lisping my evening prayer. My dear father

was with me once more, and I was as happy as when a child. It was a most delightful dream, but the awakening was intolerable anguish. I thought at first that I had died and gone to hell. I was sure that I had. My reason returned to me in the night. The night watch awakened me. She wore her keys fastened to her waist by a chain, and when she unlocked my door the chain rattled and disturbed me. She carried in her hand a lantern which was burning very brightly. This she swung carelessly into my room, then closed the door and locked it on the outside. By this time I was fully awake and in my right mind. I opened my eyes; midnight darkness filled the room. 'Fred!' I said softly. No answer; all was as still as the grave! 'Fred! Fred! where are you?' I cried; but all was silent. I put my hand out and I found that I was alone, and that the bed was a narrow one, and was of iron.

"Then I heard the voice of a woman screaming, and the words she uttered were vile beyond description. I did not know that such words could come from any woman. Evidently she awoke others near her for other women began to scream and swear. I wonder that I had not died of fright. 'Help! Help!' I called. 'Will no one hear!' Horror such as I had never known before filled my soul. 'Where am I; oh, where am I?' I kept repeating.

"I arose from my bed and groped around. The floor was bare and cold. At last I succeeded in finding the window. I flung up the window shade. It was a black night and a thunder storm was gathering although it was mid-winter. The rain was beating against my window. Suddenly there came a flash of lightning, and

by its light I saw that there were iron bars at the window! I tried to collect my thoughts, but I could not. I endeavored to find the door, but I did not succeed. A moment later a flash of lightning revealed the door. I managed to reach it, but I found there was no knob to open it. I threw myself against it. It would not move. I found the keyhole, and then it dawned upon me that it was locked upon the outside, I was a prisoner!

"The women continued to scream and swear. Finally one began praying; her voice was sweet and pathetic as a saint's: 'Forgive me, O God!' she said, 'I have committed the unpardonable sin! Forgive me, O God, I have committed the unpardonable sin! Forgive me, O God, I have committed the unpardonable sin!'

"There was no end nor variation to her prayer. She repeated the same words over and over again, while the terrible tempest without roared in mockery and the vivid lightning seemed to penetrate my prison house seeking a victim to impale on its shafts of fire.

"'I am in hell! I am in hell!' I thought, and this horrible experience must continue unceasingly through all eternity! Yes, I verily believed that I had died and gone to hell. I wailed in despair. And then I heard wild laughter; it sounded very near. It is the laugh of a fiend, I thought. 'Great Heaven have mercy!' I cried. Then I stopped crying and listened, for I heard the voice of a woman singing these words:

"'There were ninety and nine that safely lay in the shelter of the fold,
But one was out on the hills away, far out from the gates of gold;
Away on the mountains wild and bare, away from the tender Shepherd's care.

Lord, thou hast here thy ninety and nine; are they not
enough for Thee?
But the Shepherd made answer: "'Tis one of mine has
wandered away from me.
And although the road be rough and steep, I go to the
desert to find my sheep."
But none of the ransomed ever knew how deep were the
waters crossed,
Nor how dark was the night that the Lord passed
through
Ere he found his sheep that was lost.
Out in the desert he heard its cry;
Sick and helpless and ready to die.'

"The voice was sweet and melodious, and the other women ceased to swear. Perhaps they stopped to listen as I did.

"Oh, the relief, the sense of peace and comfort those old familiar words conveyed to my soul! Shall I ever forget that night! An hour dragged by, and then I heard the sound of the chain again, and the key turned in the lock. 'It is an evil spirit!' I thought. A strange sensation again possessed me. The hair seemed to rise on my head. 'God have mercy upon me!' I cried, and then a very pretty girl entered my room. It was the night watch. 'What is the matter?' she asked in a very impatient voice. 'Where am I?' I gasped. 'Is this hell?' 'No, this is not hell, it is a modern insane asylum.' 'Why am I here?' I inquired. 'Because you are insane, of course,' she roughly answered. 'Because I am insane? Great Heaven!' I exclaimed. 'Come, come,' she said, 'I cannot stop to talk; get into bed.' 'Oh give me a glass of water please,' but she was gone.

"I heard the key turn in the lock and the chain rattle

as she walked down the hall. I swooned. In another hour she came again and found me lying on the floor. She brought some water and restored me to consciousness, and put me on the bed. 'Now, lie still until morning,' she said in an ugly voice. I think I must have swooned again, for I do not remember anything until morning came.

"My breakfast was brought to me but I could not eat. Strange faces came to my door and peered into my face. It was so unearthly! so like hell! I thought it must be some division of that wretched realm. My breakfast was removed untasted. Soon after I heard the echo of a man's footstep along the corridor. It was the doctor going his morning rounds. He soon entered my room, and started back in evident surprise. The smile faded from his face as he was about to greet me. I surmise that he had usually given me a playful greeting. But he realized at once that a great change had come over the spirit of my dream. I waited for him to speak.

"'Good morning,' he said gently. But I was too impatient to observe formal greetings. 'Where am I? and how came I here?' I exclaimed. 'You have been very ill, Mrs. Garland,' he said, taking my hand, 'but there has been a most wonderful improvement during the last twenty-four hours. How do you feel?' 'Oh, I am all right physically, but I am so dismayed that I do not know what to do. I was so frightened when I awoke last night that I swooned.' 'My dear Mrs. Garland, there is nothing to fear, you will be tenderly cared for.'

"I thought of the night watch, but I made no reference to her treatment.

"'Will you kindly tell me the last thing which you

remember?'

"'When I awoke it seemed to me that I had been dreaming of my childhood for a long, long time."

"'Can you not remember what transpired just before you had this dream of childhood?'

"'Yes, I remember that I was approaching maternity. My husband and my mother were with me, also the doctor and the nurse.'

"Then I looked down upon my changed form and began to weep. The doctor understood why I was weeping. 'I beg of you to be composed, for everything is all right. Have you told me the last thing that you can remember before you commenced to dream?' 'I thought that there was a very heavy weight resting upon my head.' 'And is the weight removed now?' he earnestly inquired. 'Yes, it is removed, and I am well,' I declared. 'But where are my husband and my mother, and did my baby live?' 'Your husband and mother and baby are all alive and well.' 'Oh, kindly send for them at once!'

"'My dear lady, I will certainly do as you desire; but now you must have some breakfast for the nurse informed me that you have not eaten any.' 'Did she tell you that I was better?' 'No, she did not realize it herself. I shall write at once for your friends, and I want you to rest today so that you may be able to receive them when they come. My joy is very great, Mrs. Garland. I will go now and order another breakfast for you, and you must promise to eat it. Now trust me and all will be well. You should be a very happy woman this morning, for your recovery is marvelous.' He bade me good morning with a happy look upon his face, and I was left alone with my thoughts. Shall I ever forget it!

"My mind was keen and active and painful in its acuteness and intensity.

"'Oh, my God; I am in an insane asylum!' but the still small voice said, 'Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.'

"'Oh, my Saviour, I am alone! alone!' 'Lo, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.' 'Oh, my Father, give me my freedom!' 'Not as the world giveth, give I unto you.' Out of the depths I cried unto God, and the still small voice continued to breathe words of solace to my perturbed soul. All the doctors and the superintendent called on me during the day. They all rejoiced in my marvelous recovery, but the doctor who was in charge of my ward, and attended me from the first manifested the greatest surprise and the deepest joy," said Violette.

We were all intensely interested in what she had been telling us, but we feared it was unwise for her to recall the wretchedness she had experienced. It was all so fresh in her memory, she said, that it gave her a sense of relief to talk about it. "Oh, I wanted to leave that dreadful place at once," she continued; "but no, I must wait for my husband to come and take me away, for it was he who carried me there. My mother came the day after my recovery. Imagine the joy in my mother's heart at finding reason restored to her child. I was very impatient to see Fred, but I had to wait several days as he was here in Boston. The days seemed like years while I was waiting, but I shall always remember how kind my doctor was. I had not realized before that mortal man could be so kind and gentle to a poor sick stranger as he was to me. He was kind to everyone in

the ward, no matter how old or ugly. He was Christ-like. I had never thought much about the insane. I did not deem them worth my thoughts or anxiety. But I feel differently now, and I shall always be inexpressibly sorrowful for them.

"How glad I was to see Fred when he came. What peace and comfort came to my heart. I was in Heaven then. Oh, it is not the place that makes us happy or unhappy after all, it is the condition of the mind. When Fred told me about little Helen my joy knew no bounds. I simply could not wait at home while he came for her. I had to come with him. I hope I seem grateful enough to you all for taking such good care of my baby. Fred told me that I need not worry as she was in good hands." We vied with each other in making Violette happy. We would atone to her if possible for those blank, dreary weeks in an insane hospital.

CHAPTER XIV

The Easter-Tide

THE days flew by and we were all happy with the exception of my poor father. "I want to see my Wild bird," he said to me one day. "Irma, I used to call your mother my 'Wild bird' during the time we were together in the south, for she loved the birds so fondly. How little I thought when I bestowed that pet name upon her that she would fly away and leave me never, never to return to me again!" "Could my mother sing?" "Divinely; and she had rare skill as a musician. She could call all the wild birds by name, too, and imitate many of their notes. 'I am wild by name and nature,' she laughingly declared. There has never been a day since she left me that I have not longed to hear her sing. And I love the birds because she loved them."

The last of February I received a letter from Gerald urging me to become his bride at Easter. "I shall come for you then," he wrote, "and I hope that you will not disappoint me. I am quite certain that your mother is living in New York city. An acquaintance of mine who came from there a few days ago told me a lady by the name of Wild was staying at the hotel where he was. He gave a minute description of her, and I am convinced it is she. If we do not find her before, when I come at Easter-tide I will take a trip to New York and

see if I cannot find her. I have already sent a letter to the hotel." My father was overjoyed to receive this item of news, for he was ever brooding over his unhappy life. I ofttimes marked a tremor of agony sweep his face. He would bring his hand with sudden pressure to his heart, and his white lips would move in prayer. What is the matter?" I inquired one day when he seemed to be in mental anguish. "I am ever thinking of your mother," he said. "I spoiled her life, and for that reason I feel the keenest remorse. She did not wish to marry so soon after hearing of the death of my wife. 'Wait,' she said, 'until your wife has been dead at least a year,' but I would not listen to her. 'To lose one's self-respect is the greatest calamity that can befall a person,' she said, 'and if I yield to your wishes and wed you in a month after the burial of your wife I shall lose my self-respect.'

"But I was impatient and insistent. I felt that many years of my life had been wasted, and now that I was free my heart was filled with ambition. I had plans for winning fame, and making for myself a lofty place in the world and sharing all my honors with Madelaine. Beyond all else I was eager for children. I am of one mind with President Roosevelt and other great men on the subject of race suicide. I longed for children." "Do not reproach yourself for that, father," I said, "I think the instinct that makes men and women desire to have children is a reaching out for immortality. Men desire to live again in the lives of their children. It is a sin for people to marry who do not desire children."

My father urged me to yield to Gerald's wish and be married at Easter. "Your young life has not been

rose-colored," he said. "Do not darken it longer by feeling it your duty to remain with me. He who made the human soul made it to be happy." I said, "No. You shall be married first." "Perhaps after all these years Madelaine has ceased to care for me. I begin to fear that it is so, for she must have seen some of the advertisements I have had widely published, it seems to me." "Do not fear; do not doubt my mother's constancy," I exclaimed as he entered his library.

"How I shall miss Fred, Violette, and baby, when they return to Seattle," Helen often remarked. They had decided after much urging by Helen to remain until Easter, at which time Gerald was coming. He had not seen Violette since she came from the hospital, as he was far from home at that time. I was counting the days till Easter, for I longed for the gracious presence of my betrothed. Violette spoke of her brother very frequently, but I did not think that she was quite as fond of him as Helen was of Fred. Who can solve the great enigma of love? Helen always magnified Fred's goodness. I felt that Gerald's nature was too deep to be fully appreciated by everyone. In my pride I builded castles full of splendor where he and I would dwell together. Not material mansions, but mental ones. We would lean upon the Eternal Power of God as we journeyed through life hand in hand. Love brightens the mind and makes all things seem possible.

Easter-tide would soon be here. Only two weeks now. Gerald wrote that he had heard from New York. The proprietor of the hotel where Madelaine had been staying wrote that she had recently taken her departure for Boston. (Strange as it may seem to those who read

these pages, although I knew that Madelaine Wild was my mother I could not realize the fact, and usually when speaking of her to my father or Gerald I called her Madelaine.) When I communicated the news to my father he said, "Perhaps she has seen my advertisement and is coming to see me."

Helen appeared very sad and pensive as Easter drew near. She told me one day that she had never forgotten her dream. "I felt impressed at the time that it was prophetic," she said, "and I thought that Violette would die. I think so still, Irma. In my vision the casket was in my parlor, and do you not remember saying, 'If Violette should die her casket would not rest in your parlor?' But she is now with us, and although she appears perfectly well, I do not believe that she will leave here alive." "I think she will," I said most decidedly. "We cannot account for our dreams, Helen, I have singular dreams frequently, but I do not attach undue importance to them." "Irma," she said, "I have always been warned whenever any sorrow was about to befall Fred, and I feel that there is a cloud hanging over me. A stranger is about to enter our home who will not be welcomed!" "Do you think death so terrible, Helen?" I asked. "Not to the one who goes; it must be beautiful to go from earth to heaven. 'They who go feel not the pangs of parting, it is they who stay' that suffer," was her reply.

Another week passed quickly away. Each person in our loving little circle was interested in one another, and in his own individual thoughts. We all seemed to be living on the verge of some great event. My father was in the past and constantly longing to hear from my mother. "If we cannot be reunited I shall lose the capacity of

happiness," he said to me when speaking of the past.

Fred and Violette were preparing for their journey to their western home, and making happy plans for housekeeping after they arrived there. Helen was very sad, with the irrepressible presentiment that Violette would die before she started for home.

I was waiting for my lover, and lived with my whole soul in the present and in the future. One morning my father received the following letter from my mother, Madelaine Wild. His face was pale as death and his hand trembled as he opened it, for he recognized the handwriting at once.

MR. GEORGE WILD,
Boston, Mass.

DEAR FRIEND: —

As Easter-tide approaches I have again sought dear old Boston. Once every year since I awoke in the hospital and found myself childless have I looked upon the face of my child, our child, whom you carried away from me that day. It was well that the doctors caused me to sleep, for I could never have parted from her had I been awake. The anguish which tore my heart when I awakened and found that she was gone can be far better imagined than described. Do you think that I have not been interested in her all these years? Indeed I have known a great deal concerning her life; and every Easter Sunday I have attended the same church that she has and have managed to look upon her sweet face. I have always been thickly veiled, and once my child looked upon me, in pity I knew, from the expression of her tender eyes. As I was in mourning apparel I presume she inferred that I had lost a near friend. I was mourning for her! I have lived my life one day at a time, trying to do the duty nearest to me. I heard of

the death of your wife, and I shortly after saw your advertisement in a Boston paper. I know not what you wish to say to me after all these long, lonely years; but my heart, I think, discerns your desire. We must not make any more mistakes. I not only have seen my daughter every Easter Sunday, but by her side I have several times seen your own beautiful Irma, the child that has lived in your home, the child who has been surrounded by the love of her father and mother. She wears a different look upon her proud face from that of Helen, who has never known a mother's love. Sometimes I have been all but frantic to reveal myself to my daughter, but I have always realized that it would give her no joy to divulge to her the truth, that she had no right to have been born.

I have been told that Helen and Irma love one another. I earnestly pray that they always may. I do not cherish any feelings of jealousy towards Irma, but I plainly see the contrast between her and Helen. Bernice Wild's daughter will not marry a poor minister, but a wealthy young merchant, I am informed. My heart is aching for myself and my child. She has missed so much! She is not conscious of all that should have been hers, but I am.

I have not communicated with you during all these years, as you know. I have had no desire to. I have said to those lost years, "Sleep on, nor heed life's pelting storm." I have had no wish to disturb them. What is dead cannot be resuscitated. You desire to see me; my object in writing at this time is to say, "It can never be." I could not live near my child and not reveal myself to her, it would be utterly impossible. I have longed for her all of these years. How gladly would I surrender all the remaining years of my life if I could be with my child even for a few months and feel the warmth of her love. It is sweet to love. No, my dear friend, we must not meet again here on earth, for it is very hard for me to live a lie and live it successfully now; and I could not

live a dual life near our daughter, and your other daughter by Bernice Wild, your lawful wife. They are both beautiful, and I can truly say I love them both, which shows that I have no bitterness in my heart.

The first time I saw Irma in church I could not remove my eyes from her face for some time. Her long drooping eyelashes threw a shadow on her cheeks and she looked sweet and calm; but when she lifted her eyes I felt that she was very proud. She looked like one who had never loved, I thought. I did not hear any of the sermon that day. I gazed upon the half-sisters who knew not their relationship. Helen has always looked inspired, as though she were living for Heaven, whenever I have seen her, which has always been in church. She resembles you, I think, but your daughter Irma is dark and does not resemble either her father or mother. She is so unlike her parents in appearance that I could hardly believe she was your child, when I was thus informed.

I hope you will understand why I am unwilling to see you. Perhaps I take too much for granted, but I think not. I know why you wish to see me and the meeting would be a painful one to us both. One thought comforts me. You cannot be as lonely as I am. Your daughter's proud face is full of sunshine and joy. She must make your palatial home very bright and cheerful. Her face charmed me. I presume it is because she is your child. But I know that Helen is good and true, and I want her! I want her!

It seems strange to me to find myself writing to you after so long a silence between us — a silence which has never been broken until now. If you have anything in particular to communicate, please do so by writing. I shall remain in Boston until after Easter, and then return to New York. Now, do not build up any false hopes. We have ever been friends in our own hearts, let us remain thus until we die. I know that you feel kindly toward me; I feel the same toward you. We should not spend

the remainder of our days in regretting the past; but make the best of what is left us in life. I often recall the words of Christ: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shall know hereafter." And so I am waiting, for I feel that the loving Father will not forsake us, and if His watchful eye can behold sorrow and grief, He will provide a precious recompense in the realm beyond for the many heartaches we have sustained in this life. God bless you, my dear friend, and while you love and cherish the child in your home, do not forget the lonely outcast so near you. Watch over her and guard her from all sorrow as far as possible, and pray for her unhappy mother that she may be resigned. It stirs my feeling deeply to be writing thus to you. The tears flow in spite of myself, and somehow my pen seems loath to write that sad word, but it must be, and so,

Farewell and farewell,
MADELAINE I. WILD.

My father was crushed — broken down and subdued, as a slender reed falls a victim to the merciless blast of the tempest. His strength was gone. He handed me the letter and I carefully perused it, repressing my own emotion. "Father," I said to him, "why do you take such a sad view of my mother's letter? She does not know that she is my mother; that it is her child that has always been with you in our home." "Oh, I do not think that would make any difference to her," he replied, "she would hardly feel more kindly, I fear. She would conclude that I had practiced more deception than I had need to, and the thought that you had called another 'mother' and had apparently loved her all of these years, believing her to be your mother, would seem very cruel to Madelaine who loves truth more than anything else. I am hopeless," he moaned. "Well, she will attend Mr.

Greenwood's church next Sunday, I suppose, as it is Easter," I said, "and I shall attend also. I am sure that I shall be able to distinguish my mother from all others. She will wear mourning and be heavily veiled. I shall seek the woman in black with the heavy veil, and I shall go to her and say, 'Mother, come home with me. I am Irma, your child!'" "It must be broken gently to your mother, Irma, otherwise it would unnerve her."

Gerald came that evening and my happiness was almost complete. When my mother was restored to me, as I firmly believed that she would be, my cup of joy would be full.

We spent the evening at Helen's. The meeting between Violette and Gerald was very affecting. Violette wept for joy. "Oh, Gerald," she said, "I shall always love life and freedom more than I ever did before. Yet there will always be a sore spot in my heart when I remember that my friends put me away from them when my mind ceased to be strong."

"Do not blame us, sister, we felt that it was for the best. You needed to be kept quiet, and at times you were willful and determined to run away like a naughty child." Violette's face flushed. She could not understand her mental condition during her illness. "Violette," said Gerald, kindly, "I beg you to not permit your mind to dwell on your illness again. It is extremely unwise for you to think or converse about it. Cease to remember it. All unpleasant circumstances should be forgotten as soon as possible. God has restored you and it is your duty to be happy and forget the experience through which you have passed."

"It seems strange that God should send such a fear-

ful calamity upon me," said Violette sadly. "I always supposed that only the wicked and gross ever became insane." "Perhaps you needed to learn a different lesson," said Gerald. "I met such lovely refined women who had become mentally unbalanced. It seems so strange God should send such an affliction upon them if He is Love," said Violette.

"God sends only good — you wrong Him when you think differently. Sin, sickness, and sorrow do not come from His divine hand. Tomorrow is Easter, Violette; I would have you feel that you have risen to a new life with Christ, who came to teach us the way to health and happiness. I recall the words of Longfellow: 'Look not mournfully into the past, it comes not back again. Wisely improve the present, it is thine. Go forth to meet the shadowy future without fear and with a brave heart.' These words have ever been an inspiration to me, Violette."

"I never was strong like you, Gerald, but I will earnestly endeavor to let the past rest, and never mention my illness again." Then she spoke of Helen: "Oh, Gerald, you do not know how I love my sister-in-law. She is so sympathetic and affectionate." Gerald made no reply, but looked at me with love-light in his eyes. He was wondering, I presume, if Violette did not also love her prospective sister-in-law.

Just then Helen entered the room, carrying her little namesake in her arms. I arose and took the baby. "You are not feeling well," I remarked; "you look extremely pale." "My heart is troubling me a good deal tonight," she said. "I hope I am not going to be seriously ill, for I want to attend church tomorrow. Every year since I

can remember I have received an Easter offering by mail from some unknown person. The address has always been written by the same hand, a lady's. And the postmark has always been Boston. I have never been able to learn who sends them. Year after year they have appeared just before Easter. A beautiful booklet came last evening. I will show it to you."

She went to her room and brought it for us to see. It was "Easter Lilies" and we all admired it very much. "May I see the address?" I asked. She produced it. I had seen the handwriting before. It was Madelaine Wild's!

Oh, what a happy evening that was! When Gerald and I were alone, I told him of the letter my father had received from my mother, and we decided to go with Helen to church on the morrow, as we hoped to see the form of Madelaine, my mother. I felt intense excitement at the thought of beholding her even at a distance.

The morrow! Ah, the morrow! Early Easter morning, ere the daylight broke a dreaded guest came to the home of Helen Greenwood. Oh, that we might have barred him from the happy household. But what are bars or bolts to him. He the mighty messenger of mystery whose monitions mortals fear and whose implacable mandates all obey. How we all shrunk and trembled in his impressive Presence, for we knew that he had come to take away the very jewel of our hearts, our precious Helen. All through the long hours of that lovely Easter Sabbath we prayed he might depart. But the doctor told us when he first came that there was no hope, our beautiful Helen was about to leave us for a long journey, from which she would never return. Could

it be that this golden-haired woman — my friend and my sister — was going to die? Oh, the sorrow of our hearts as we all stood around her bed! My father's anguish was beyond description. It was greater even than Fred's or her husband's. I know he felt that he had wronged his child. Her gentle spirit knew that it was about to take its flight to a fairer world than this, and she, in the implicit faith that it was His will, murmured no regrets except for us. As she kissed us good-bye she breathed into the ear of each a parting message. To Violette she said: "Call the baby Helen Irma. I would love to feel that those two names were linked together throughout all eternity."

She left all her jewels to little Helen. To each one she gave some gift, with loving words. She was the calmest one in that sad home.

"Death does not mean much to me," she said. "It is just passing on, to be with loved ones gone before. I have no fear! Christ holds my hand in His. He has been this way before me, and it gives me unspeakable peace to feel that He is near."

She did not suffer pain, but passed to peaceful slumber like a child. Not once again did she speak to us, but slept until the Easter Sabbath ended and the shadows of the night came down. The long, long hours of the night passed away, and in the early morning she spoke, but not to us: "I am coming!" she said. And then our tears fell like rain upon her waxen hands. Through all the sad hours of the night we had stood beside her, now she had left us.

I recalled my dream. I saw her mother waiting to receive her; I saw the beautiful crown about to be placed

upon her brow; I heard the voices of angels singing a sweet song of welcome. Would I call her back to earth, my poor wronged sister? No, no! And yet I wanted her, for I loved her. We all loved her.

Madelaine Wild did not see her on Easter Sunday, I thought. "She will hear that she is gone and seek her here." I knew it would be so. Helen's vision was about to be fulfilled.

Helen's husband was calm and saintlike. "I will leave the arrangements of the funeral all with you and Fred," he said to me. "You understand those things better than I do. You were acquainted with her taste and will know what she would desire." And then my father spoke, "Mr. Greenwood, I knew your wife's parents. For their sakes will you not permit us to place the dear form of your wife in a casket we may select, and may she not for Irma's sake rest in our family lot in Mount Auburn? I would place her by the side of my wife, for she loved her dearly." Mr. Greenwood consented, and Fred said: "It is very kind of you, Mr. Wild; our parents are sleeping at the bottom of the ocean, and ever since that fatal voyage you have been like a father to Helen, and Irma has been like a sister to her. Since our uncle died we have been all alone in the world in regard to any ties of blood; but those who are not our kindred have cheered us on life's way. How different would it have been had our parents lived!" he sighed. My father moaned aloud! "In regard to a casket in which to place our beloved one, I wish that it might be of pale pink broadcloth," said Fred. "Pink was Helen's favorite color, and I have heard her say that she would want everything bright and beautiful around her in

death."

My father ordered the richest casket that could be obtained, it was the color of peach blossoms, and Fred covered it with fragrant Easter Lilies.

On the morning of the funeral a beautiful stranger, a lady, entered the house. She came in an elegant carriage drawn by two white horses. The coachman came to the door and begged permission for a lady to view the remains of Mrs. Greenwood. "I knew Mrs. Greenwood when she was a baby," was the message she sent by the coachman. Mr. Greenwood consented, and Fred stood at the door to receive her. He opened the parlor door, and the lady entered. He was about to follow, when she said in the most beseeching voice, "May I not be alone with the dead for a few brief minutes?" Her wish was granted, and for one half hour she lingered with the dead. Then she quietly went away as she had come.

When Fred related the occurrence to me I was not at all surprised. I knew that Madelaine Wild had been to look upon the face of her child, as she verily believed. She must be undeceived. All must be made clear. Would she love me? She must. Of course she would love her child. How strange it all seemed. I was thankful that Gerald shared our secret. Oh, what a mighty arm of strength my lover was! He was so calm and grand and noble! How desolate I would have been without him now that dear Helen was gone from me. Our loved one was beautiful in death. We could not realize that she would never awaken here, but Gerald made me feel that she was not dead, but had simply and most naturally been exalted to a position in God's better and brighter realm more befitting her.

"There is no such thing as death," he said, "Helen knows nothing of death; she is more alive than she ever was before. She lives the life immortal. No harm has come near her; she has just passed on to a higher realm. My heart beats a response to the words of Longfellow:

"'There is no death. What seems so is transition.
This life of mortal breath is but a suburb of the life elysian,
Whose portals we call death.'"

In spite of Gerald's words of faith it was hard to endure the separation from one I loved so fondly. Could Helen have a more beautiful body than the one she had vacated? I could not imagine her spirit clothed in a form more beautiful to behold. But she will never know pain any more. As I thought of all the pain which she had endured in the earth-life I came to feel that I would not repine, for it was well with her.

How deeply I sympathized with Fred. "My sister was my idol!" he said. "She was dearer to me than aught else on earth, much as I love my wife and baby. My sister was my idol. I longed for her presence when I was absent from her, and when I was with her I was always happy and contented, and I shall never behold her again!" He wept bitterly.

If they had known that they were not related before either of them was married, they would have loved as a man and woman love each other, I thought, and would have been so happy together! But they did not know, and I had no right to think what might have been. Our dear one had passed on where they do not marry, nor in marriage are they given, but are like the angels in Heaven.

CHAPTER XV

God is Love

THE world moved on just as it had before my sweet sister died, but life was not the same. I longed to go away somewhere. I desired to be a long distance from Rev. Paul Greenwood's home. I never entered it after they carried away my golden-haired sister. Fred and Violette with little Helen Irma frequently came to our house, and we entertained Gerald the greater part of the time. Fred and Violette would return to Washington in a few weeks, taking with them the little girl, but Helen would not be here to miss them as she thought she would.

Gerald declared that he should take me with him when he returned. I was fully determined not to leave my father, he seemed so broken-hearted and hopeless. We knew not the future, but I feared he would some time leave me suddenly, as my precious sister had. If my father and mother could be reunited all would be well. I felt sure from the tone of her letter that my mother had not ceased to love him. Would Helen's death produce any change in her feelings toward him, I wondered. It might make her bitter, or it might soften her. I expressed some such thought to Gerald.

"You do not know your mother," he replied. "She is all love. Her creed is love. She never would harbor bitterness toward any human being. I often recall

her gracious manner and I know that she possesses a serene temper. She firmly believes in God, who is love. She told me on board the steamer that she did not think God ever designed any schemes of punishment outside of those which are brought about by the sinful deed itself. A man is punished by his sins, not for them. She has entered into peace through accepting the wormwood and drinking all of it. Your mother is capable of great happiness and she has a right to it. We have her address and I will call on her tomorrow, if you and your father approve such a course. I will break the news gently to her, that her own child still lives and is hungry for her mother's love. Do you not think it a wise plan, Irma?"
"I most certainly do," I replied.

"Madelaine Wild taught me more about the wonderful love of God than any other person I ever met," said Gerald. "Oh, how happy I shall be to take to her the glad tidings concerning her beautiful living child. How surprised and rejoiced she will be. Irma, I love my future mother-in-law, her gentle and lovable virtues have never faded in my memory since I met her a stranger." "I am glad that you do," I said, "and I think that if any one could win her to our home it would be her future son-in-law. You have a benign and winning influence over all, I believe. Before I met you I was a man-hater, I thought."

"Who ever suggested any such foolish thought as that?" inquired Gerald.

"Perhaps I suggested it to myself," I said laughing. "I have doubtless entertained many foolish ideas concerning your sex until I met the king of them all." "When did you meet him, and where?" he asked. "Oh,

how modest you are!" I replied. "He is the man I intend to wed."

"Irma, the king to every woman is the man she loves. When I say your mother is all love I do not mean that she is a weak, sentimental woman, gushing and shallow-minded in her nature, I mean that she possesses the spirit of the great Master and imparts it to others by her gracious manner and good sense. She must be seen and undeceived. It is a duty we owe to her, to your father, and to ourselves as well.

I agreed with him perfectly, and we went in search of my father to talk the matter over with him. "Yes, Madelaine ought to know the truth," he said, "but I fear that our estrangement will be greater than heretofore, if possible, when she knows how I have deceived her." "She will come to you for my sake I know, father, for what can equal a mother's love? She will deem it her duty to come," I said. "I want her to come for love's sake! I have lived a loveless life so long. You know, Irma, you have never understood me until recently," he said. "I always felt restraint; it seemed to me there was something wrong somewhere, and I wondered greatly over the matter. I have felt grieved many times that there was a lack of confidence between us. It is so solacing to be sincere! I could not love the woman whom I had been taught was my mother, and when my own dear mother knows all, I feel we may then begin to live in harmony and love. A hidden sin is the worst of all," I said. "Oh, my beautiful one, for long years I have waited for her, and now she is in Boston, not far from me, yet not with me, and I fear she will never consent to become my wife!" he exclaimed sorrowfully.

That evening my father received another letter from my mother; it read thus:

MR. GEORGE WILD,
Boston, Mass.

MY DEAR FRIEND: — The curtains of darkness hang like a pall around me today, and there is not a rift in the clouds above to admit a single ray of light. My heart is revealed to me at last, now that it is too late. I have been waiting for my child all these years and knew it not as I know it now. Hope has ever whispered to me of a time when she would know me and love me. That time is past. In the morning, on the day of her funeral, I looked upon her in her casket, and shed tears of remorse. I said, "Forgive me, Helen, forgive me," but no voice made reply. "What cruel monster has separated us all these years? I have asked my soul. Many would say that fate had parted us. But I know better. *Fear,* that cruel demon who has ever haunted my life, has kept me from my child and robbed me of happiness. I have feared what the world would say. God's book tells us that perfect love casteth out fear. Did I not love more than I feared? It seems I did not. Were she alive today I would defy the world. I would laugh in its face and revel in the sunshine of my daughter's love. Oh, how gladly would I lead her forth and say to my friends and my enemies (if I have any) "This is the child of my love. Behold her! She is pure as the driven snow!" Oh, how I have suffered for one little sin, one mistake of my life, and still I suffer! We married too soon after hearing of the death of your wife. Our love could not have been all love, else we should have waited until we were not ashamed to announce our marriage. I did not know in those youthful days how to distinguish between love and passion. Our child was blameless, and I have been a guilty woman to cherish *fear* all these years. I felt today that I must write to you

once more, for my heart is hungry for sympathy. I am grateful to you that our child is buried with your people in Mt. Auburn. Will you grant these, my last requests? May I rest beside Helen when my time comes to go? And will you send me a picture of our child? I placed my little locket containing your picture and my own, beneath the folds of her snow white robe. Oh, how I wanted her to know all! I feel that she does now; but she can never say, "You are forgiven, mother." I feel for you deeply. I know all that you must have suffered. I am unnerved. I simply had to write to you, but you need not feel obliged to reply, for your silence will be interpreted as your consent. If you do not write to me, my request to some time rest beside my daughter, I shall feel, is granted, and I feel sure that you can procure one of her pictures and send to me.

Your desolate friend,

MADELAINE I. WILD.

"My poor Madelaine, my heart's own, how she has suffered!" my father exclaimed when he had finished reading. I saw him wipe the tears away, but when he placed the letter in his writing desk he smiled curiously, and immediately wrote the following reply:

MRS. MADELAINE WILD,
Boston, Mass.

MY DEAR MADELAINE: —

Your requests shall be granted. I will send the picture of our beloved daughter to you next Wednesday afternoon. It is an oil portrait painted when she was eighteen years of age. It gives me great joy to be able to bestow this gift on you. I know that you will appreciate it more than you have any idea of. I shall send the picture by a gentleman, an intimate, trusted friend. Will you be home to receive him? When you look upon our

daughter's beautiful face remember her father, who prays that your happiness may be greater than you anticipate when you behold the picture of our child.

With much love,

GEORGE WILD.

My father smilingly submitted his letter for my perusal.

I did not fully approve of the spirit of my father's epistle. I told Gerald that he must not produce my picture until after he had made the matter clear to my mother. "I shall not be likely to attempt any joke," he said. "The delusion under which Mrs. Wild has rested during all these years is no trifling matter, Irma. I shall be guided by One who is above all and over all. He never fails to rule all things wisely. The Spirit shall guide me, and teach me what to do and to say. The Bible tells us that all things work together for good to those who love the Lord, but the good Book does not tell us all we need to know. God is greater than the Bible, and He writes His law upon the heart. I believe that all things work together for good even if we do not love the Lord. Everything is leading us on towards God and truth. We accept the truth just as fast as we are capable of receiving it. How eager I am for more light, Irma. Your mother is a wise woman, of high intellectual and spiritual endowments. She can teach us much truth, all we may be able to grasp. She reflects God in her life constantly. How helpful it would be to have such a woman in one's home."

"Is she superior to my father?" I inquired. "We will not discuss that," he said, "'comparisons are odious,' we are told. If she has a weakness it is that she is too

yielding, too eager to give happiness. We should seek to please God first of all. I am sure that is her chief aim, but she told me that she was ofttimes tempted to yield to her friend's wishes despite of her better judgment; and this was the case when she consented to marry your father, I believe. I am sure that her regret has been so great that the proposition of marrying him now will be displeasing to her. I want to see them both happy for your sake and for their own also. I sincerely hope that Mrs. Wild will consent to a second union; but I feel that it will require the tenderest persuasion. We will know on Wednesday evening what we may expect, and if she will not make a home for your father, we may gain his consent to go with us." "He never will, I am sure," I said, "and if Madelaine Wild will not become my father's wife, I shall never seek her acquaintance, notwithstanding the fact that she is my mother!" "You will deprive yourself then of great happiness, I am sure," said Gerald.

Wednesday came. Gerald took my picture and started on his delicate mission of love and strategy. "If this picture does not win her I shall take the living picture tomorrow," he said as he kissed me good-bye.

My father and I were exceedingly restless all through the long hours of that afternoon. "My fate hangs on Mr. Strong's diplomacy," said my anxious father, "it will be life or death to me!"

Gerald did not return until late in the afternoon. "Oh, what did she say?" I said, meeting him in the reception hall. He replied only by kissing me, and entered the sitting-room in deep thought, apparently. He found my father there anxiously awaiting him. "Well,"

said my father sadly, "what did Madelaine say after you had explained to her my vile deception?"

"I will endeavor to relate my interview with Mrs. Wild," said Gerald. "I presume you desire to hear all the details from beginning to end, that you may be enabled to judge correctly."

CHAPTER XVI

Mother and Daughter

"I FOUND Mrs. Wild pale and sad, anxiously awaiting the arrival of her daughter's picture. Of course she was not expecting to see me, and her surprise was very great. She remembered me at once, and was notably kind and friendly in her greeting.

"'This is an unexpected pleasure,' she said, in her own gracious manner, 'I did not know that you were East.' We entered into conversation upon trivial subjects, current events, etc. She is a fine conversationalist, and the minutes flew by and I knew not what to say, nor where to begin. I shall have to begin abruptly, I thought, and so I summoned my courage and exclaimed earnestly, 'Mr. Wild has conferred upon me the great pleasure and honor of bringing his daughter's picture to you as a gift.'

"'His daughter's picture!' she repeated. 'Yes, Mrs. Wild, his daughter's and *yours* also.' She was no longer pale. Her cheeks flushed, and her eyes glowed with a strange excitement. The tiny birthmark in her forehead was scarlet. I waited several minutes for her to speak, but she uttered not a word. I broke the silence else it would never have been broken, I verily believe.

"'Mrs. Wild,' I said, 'it may seem strange to you that I am in possession of the secret of your life, but you

will understand better as I proceed. 'I think that I know already, Mr. Strong. I have been informed that you were betrothed to Miss Wild, consequently your prospective father-in-law saw fit after more than twenty years to divulge the fact to you that he was the father of two daughters, instead of one, as the world believes. What he hoped to gain by such a course I know not, but one thing I do know: I ceased to care what the future might bring to me when I saw my child asleep, for I cannot call it death. My child still lives, and I hope that she is ever near me. She knows all now, I am sure.' 'Yes, Mrs. Wild, your daughter still lives, and as you say, she knows all now, but not what you suppose. I am here to give you information, to tell you what you have never known nor mistrusted.' 'Do you come with a message from Heaven? I am mourning for my child, and no information apart from her would interest me today,' she said in a sad and bitter tone.

"'I have a message from your child! Do you remember when you and I were together on the broad ocean, how I feared that my good, kind father was eternally lost on account of his unbelief? Do you recall our conversation? You told me then there was no sin so great that God could not forgive it. I have come to plead for Mr. Wild. You have refused to see him, and so he has sent me to you. He has sinned more deeply than you imagine. He not only deceived his wife, but he also deceived you, the woman whom he loved.'

"'How did he deceive me, Mr. Strong?' 'You supposed that he left your child with Mr. and Mrs. Garland, did you not?' She looked too bewildered to reply, and I continued. 'He took your child to Mr. and Mrs.

Garland's but he did not leave her there, but instead took her to his own home, and he named her Irma for her mother. Mr. and Mrs. Garland adopted the child of Bernice Wild, and named her Helen.' Mrs. Wild placed her hands tightly over her face, as though she would be alone with her own soul. She trembled violently, but not a sound escaped her. She seemed to be struck dumb with astonishment. I feared that the revelation had killed her, and I took her in my arms and carried her to the couch, her eyes were still closed. I feared she would never open them. She seemed pulseless and cold. I had anticipated this shock and was provided with a few restoratives. I tried to force some wine between her lips, but she could not swallow. I bathed her head. All my efforts failed. I noticed the Bible and other religious literature on the table. I took the Bible and opening it to the ninety-first psalm began reading it aloud. I had read but a few verses when I heard her sobbing. When I had finished it she rose from the couch, and words are inadequate to describe the heavenly radiance of her face as she went to the piano and began playing her favorite song: 'Jesus, Lover of my Soul.' She asked me to sing it, which I did. She is passionately fond of music and I have heard her say it was always quieting to her nerves. When I had finished the song I said, 'I must go now. Shall I undo the picture for you before I go?' She shook her head sadly. 'Remember when you look upon the pictured face of your daughter, that the original will come tomorrow to see her mother.' 'I will see her first,' she said. 'Oh, why did he deceive me? I feel like Doubting Thomas, I cannot believe until I have examined for myself. My child has a birthmark. I saw it when

she was born. It was very peculiar, being much like the birthmark in my own forehead only that it was larger and brighter and was on the right arm of my child above the elbow. If beautiful Irma Wild is my child I shall know her; but I am filled with doubt.' 'Do you distrust me?' I asked. 'Oh, no, Mr. Strong, but the man who has deceived me all these years might continue to do so a few years longer.' 'Mrs. Wild, you must not forget your own statement, that there is no sin so great that God cannot forgive it.' 'I believe it, but you must remember that I am a weak mortal woman, that is all.' 'I will bring your daughter to you tomorrow,' I said and bade her adieu."

"My father groaned, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" "Whatsoever a man sows that shall he also reap," said Gerald. But I pitied my father. I remembered those long loveless years with the woman who was a victim to morphine. My father and mother must be reunited, I resolved. I would picture to her the dismal life we had led. No love-light in our home, no smiles nor kisses, but never would I breathe one word against Helen Greenwood's mother. She might blame whomsoever she would, I would only plead for her to come to us. But how could I wait until the morrow, there had been waiting enough already. I would arise and go to my mother at once and I would plead with her to forgive and forget. I hastened to my own room and dressed myself, and then ordered a carriage. Upon reaching the hotel where she was stopping I had my card sent to her. It was after eight o'clock, and she received me in her own room. I passionately embraced her and then I quickly bared my arm. "Look upon the birth-

mark, mother. I am your child, your own daughter, Irma Elaine Wild. Do you doubt it? Come to the mirror, and place your sweet face beside mine. Do you not see the resemblance, mother? I have come to take you home with me this very night!" I could see that she was thrilled with deep emotion and her hand pressed her palpitating heart while her eyes seemed to be feasting on my face and figure. I strove to repress my own agitation for the moment. I did not wait for her to decide, she had not even spoken. I went to the wardrobe and brought her bonnet, and was about to place it on her head when she said: "Not tonight, Irma, that is impossible. Come to me tomorrow." "I will come, and you will accompany me home, will you not?" "I cannot promise that." "Are you not going to love me, mother? Remember I have never known a dear mother's love." "Neither did Helen," she sadly replied. "I know it, but you would not surely hold me responsible for that. I beg of you do not reproach me, I loved Helen dearly, not knowing that she was my sister. The woman that I called mother never truly loved me, neither did I love her as a child should love a parent. And now my own mother, who gave me birth, seems to turn away from me to love the still white face of the girl who is dead more than she loves me, her own child! Oh, mother, I so need your tender love and I have such a wealth of love to pour out to you in return." The tears were coursing down my cheeks as I buried my face in my hands.

"It is all so strange and sudden, Irma. Come to me tomorrow. I feel I am but under the spell of a delusive dream. My heart has hungered so long in vain for this love and joy that it is timorous lest it shall prove unreal.

Of course I love my daughter — my proud, handsome Irma — but I cannot quite realize yet the full felicity of this joyous reunion, dear," she said. After a loving embrace, during which I sobbed with unspeakable joy, I came away as happy as a bird, for I thought that I should win and heal by my devotion my mother's wounded heart. A new life was before me. I was about to turn to a spotless page. Gerald and my new found mother were my ideals. I seemed to rise to a newness of purpose. The past appeared to drop from me like some old worn-out garment. "I will leave the past alone," I mentally declared. "The future like an unwritten book is awaiting me. I will write a poem of love on every page."

What a golden dream it was, with my pathway all strewn with roses! "I will gather the most beautiful ones and enjoy them while I may," I thought. I was very happy. It is sweet to live when one is happy, and it is not difficult to be happy with those whom we love. Heaven is love. When our ideal is real to us we have reached Heaven.

CHAPTER XVII.

It Might Have Been

THE following day Gerald proposed going with me to see my newfound mother. Neither he nor my father knew that I had been to see her the previous evening. "Gerald," I said, "when I see my mother I want to be alone with her." "But I will accompany you." "No," I said decidedly. "I do not desire you to; you are very kind, but I do not want to feel that you are waiting for me. My call may be a very long one. You went alone yesterday, let me go by myself today." "But if she should be unnerved and overcome by her emotions as she was yesterday, what would you do?" "I would apply the Truth which restored her yesterday. She will not die. Joy seldom kills," I replied smilingly. "Of course she is expecting you, and I can understand you would both prefer to be alone at the first meeting."

"Bring her home with you if she will come," said my father.

"I certainly will," I exclaimed. "Be prepared to see Madelaine Wild, my mother, with me when I return." "God grant that it may be so," he earnestly said.

On arriving at the hotel I was ushered into my mother's private parlor, where she was evidently waiting to receive me. The sun poured brilliantly into the room, and I saw that my new-found mother was even more

winsome by daylight than in the evening. She embraced me fondly and her lips met mine with a lingering, motherly caress. She was dressed in a rich morning costume of pale blue cashmere. It was a very cool morning and the window shades were all up. I am very fond of the sunshine, and it seemed more glorious to me this morning than ever before. My mother seemed to be a part of it. Her mass of dark brown hair, with here and there a silver thread was twisted loosely from her neck and fastened with a single star of pearls. Her eyes shone with pleasurable excitement. A look of relief, almost of gladness, passed over her features when I told her that I had come alone. On an easel was my picture. "I have studied it constantly ever since you were here yesterday," she said. "Yes, you are the child of my love, the sweet one that I held to my breast for one short month, — my heart's own! For long years I have waited for you, and now I have found you my perturbed soul is restored to its maternal peace and joy." She kissed me again and again. "It is strange that I did not know that you belonged to me the first time I saw you in the church. You came in alone before Helen did. I was there to obtain a glimpse of my child, but I little thought that you were she when I first saw you. I had kept in touch with Helen all those years, through friends, for I verily believed that she was my daughter. I had not seen you since you were one month old, but I had seen her every Easter Sunday. I seemed to live for that purpose and when she died on last Easter Sunday I sought her then. And still I was strangely attracted towards you, and when I was informed that you were the daughter of George Wild, I inferred that that was the reason.

I was fascinated by your voice and countenance."

"Did you hear me speak?" I asked. "I did, for I was very near you, and I heard you invite Helen to accompany you home, and she readily assented. She did not look happy, I thought." "She was happy, but she always had a pensive look in church. In those days I only went to church for the sake of being with Helen." "I am glad that you loved one another," exclaimed my mother." "Helen's love was the brightest spot in my life," I answered. "She whom I called mother had instilled the thought within me that I was a man-hater. She said that I had a prenatal tendency to hate the opposite sex. I had many admirers, but I could not love any of them, and so I finally came to the conclusion that I should never care for any one in particular. I was convinced in my own mind that I should never wed. I was determined that I would never marry a man whom I did not love with my whole heart and soul." "It was a wise resolve," said my mother, "it is folly to marry for any other reason, especially for any mercenary motive. One should never wed knowing that another lives whom they prefer. I may open my heart to my newfound daughter, I am sure." "Certainly," I answered, sealing her trust with a kiss.

"I loved Charles Wild, your father's cousin, only as a friend, and I ought not to have married him. I had already met your father, and I knew the first time I saw him that I could never love another as I was capable of loving him. But at that time he was very devoted to a dear friend of mine who was ten years my senior, Amy Thurber. I was not quite eighteen when I first met him, but I wished to possess his love even then. After Amy's

death he had nervous prostration, and went to Vermont for his health, where he became acquainted with Bernice Duhammell, whom he married. Meanwhile I became engaged to Charles Wild, and we were passably happy together, yet I wept when alone when I heard of the engagement of your father to Bernice, for I thought if I had been free he might have cared for me. We all change and forget more or less. When Amy died he declared he should never love again, but in about a year's time he was engaged to Bernice Duhammell. I was astonished beyond measure. This step was inexplicable to me. Charles and I were married before your father was, and Bernice was bridesmaid and your father his cousin's best man. Observing them closely I could discern no true love between them, and I pitied them both sincerely. About a year after my husband's death I visited them by invitation. Your father and his wife both urged me to come. I felt very sad and lonely, for I had become very fond of my husband. It was a fateful visit. I knew nothing of the demon jealousy. The thought of making trouble between husband and wife never entered my heart. I could not be guilty of so great a sin. I did not willfully do wrong for I was as innocent as a child. My heart, heavy with my own sorrow, was soft and tender towards Bernice, and I longed for her sympathy. But I incurred her displeasure, even her jealousy, which was cruel as the grave. I could never understand why she disliked me so. Your father was merely a friend. I would have been greatly rejoiced to have found them happy together, although I knew that they were not well mated. I did not, however, suspect they were drifting apart, and I would never have entered

their home had I thought such a thing possible as a separation. I do not believe in divorces. If one finds one's self unhappy in the marriage relation, there is nothing to do but to make the best of it. It is a holy ordinance, and should be kept sacred.

"One morning I went down to breakfast and saw plainly that there was discord in the home. I resolved to return to my suite at the hotel the following day, but even then I did not suspect that I was the cause of any inharmony.

"The next morning I had a severe headache and did not go down stairs until nearly noon. Then I found that your father was alone. 'Bernice has gone home,' he said very sadly. Of course I was greatly surprised. 'Bernice gone home!' I exclaimed. 'Yes; she has gone to stay, Madelaine. My wife and I have separated.' 'What is the cause?' I asked in amazement. 'She committed a sin when she was home one year ago and she has only just confessed it to me. It is a sin I never can forgive, and we shall never live together again as husband and wife.'

"I naturally supposed that she had been faithless to him during her visit to her Green Mountain home, and had confessed the same.

"I told him that my trunks were already packed, and the following day I should return to New York, where I was staying. He expressed his sorrow that my visit was to terminate so suddenly, while I felt grieved that Bernice should go without bidding me good-bye, as I was her guest and had come by her cordial invitation; but I felt innocent of all blame. We spent the evening together and but little more was said concerning Bernice.

He seemed very sad and despondent. I never thought of blaming your father. I felt such deep sympathy for him that I could not sleep that night. I not only grieved that your father's home had been left desolate, but I pitied Bernice. How weak she must be, I thought, to prove faithless to one like George Wild. I marveled that any villain could have power to tempt her from the path of chastity, an irreparable sin in a woman." "Is it not equally wrong for a man to be immoral?" I asked.

"Indeed it is in God's sight, but so low is the moral standard of the world that the man's sin is generally viewed with more lenient eyes. The unequal load falls on the woman, whose fall is fatal. She is spurned by the same society which too often receives the man with open arms. The next morning your father was exceedingly sad. 'I am alone! I am utterly alone!' he exclaimed. 'I am sincerely sorry for you,' was all I could say. When he said good-bye to me, he sighed and repeated those oft remembered lines of Whittier: 'Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, it might have been.' The appealing look he gave me lingered long in my thoughts and made me also feel that 'it might have been.'

"I returned to New York, to my apartments in a hotel. All the home I have had since my husband died has been in hotels. Half of the time at least has been spent in traveling. I did not see nor hear from your father again until he came to tell me that his wife was dead. At which time he proposed marriage. I loved him fondly and I promised to become his wife in one year from that time. 'Marry me now,' he begged. 'Madelaine,' he said, 'I had never known love until I

met you. Do not keep me waiting.' 'Have you forgotten gentle Amy?' I asked. 'Oh, that was a boyish love,' he answered. 'I have not forgotten her. I cherish her memory, but my love for her was like a big boy's fondness for a sister. She was seven years my senior, you know, and I never mentioned the word love to her.'

"I believed him. I felt within my own heart that we were drawn to each other by the highest and holiest of human ties. My soul secretly confessed the finding of its mate. He passionately urged that it was but a cruel formality to delay our legal union when our hearts were confessedly indissolubly united. I finally yielded to his entreaties, as you are aware.

"We both understood that it was not conventional, so we decided to keep the marriage a secret. That was our sin. Never do anything which you are ashamed to acknowledge, Irma. Your father has doubtless told you all this in substance. But I desired you to know from what standpoint I viewed the matter." "I think I understand you perfectly," I replied. "Oh, my child! How I suffered when you were born! I was among strangers, and I hoped and expected to die and be buried by strangers. You and I faced death together for many long weary hours the day you first saw the light." "We will face life, now, together, my own dear mother," I replied. We embraced one another. It seemed to me that I had always known her. There was no restraint between us; the natural current of love between mother and daughter was at last restored, and our heart to heart talks brought to us such peace and happiness that it seemed some Power had raised its hand and stilled the storm of the past, leaving calm unruffled skies. "The

deep joy of this hour," said my mother as she pressed me to her bosom, "thrills my soul like that touch of the Divine hand, and gives my bruised heart unspeakable comfort. The human heart longs for happiness. What people desire is to ascertain how to exchange pain for pleasure; sorrow for happiness. How thin the veil is often (and how easily lifted when love impels us) that separates us from the sacred objects of our yearnings. When we fully understand the science of mind, the Divinity that is in us, we shall always be happy. We shall be in heaven and heaven within us."

The minutes flowed into hours so swiftly that it was luncheon time before we realized it. "I have several friends staying at the hotel whom I would like to have you meet, but if you prefer we will have luncheon served in my own rooms," said my mother. "I would enjoy meeting your friends," I answered, and so we repaired to the table d'hote and lunched with some of the guests. Several of the persons present were very witty and amusing in their conversation. Joy was a tonic to me which gave me an appetite. My mother introduced me as her cousin, Miss Wild, which was true as her husband and my father were cousins. One old lady remarked that she thought we resembled each other, and my mother smiled. Every smile, every expression was interesting to me. My mother's suite of rooms in the hotel seemed more homelike to me than my father's mansion had in days gone by. My mother proposed taking a ride after dinner, but I told her that I had much rather remain in and hear her talk. "I want your whole life up to the present time," I said, and so she led the way into her cosy parlor.

"I have not led a solitary, brooding life, Irma," she

commenced, after we were comfortably seated. "I have been in the midst of pleasant surroundings. I have crossed the ocean seven times since the day I parted from your father. My life has been rich in experience, but my heart has been hungry and starved for the love of my child. I have seen the splendors, mysteries, and peoples of the old world, but never a day went by when I did not think of the little babe I held to my breast for one short month. 'Where is she today? Is she happy?' were the questions I was always asking myself. The beauties of that marvelous city, Paris, did not make me forget you. I hope you may sometime see Paris, Irma." And then she told me of its monuments, palaces, statuary, museums, and everyday life of its gay population, until I was charmed with her graphic description of that superb metropolis.

"And all the pleasures of Paris did not satisfy you?"

"No; it did not satisfy. I knew that your father and his wife had been reunited, and as I had no right to his love I tried to forget him, but I did not try to forget my child," she said with deep emotion. "I hope that you have not ceased to love my father," I exclaimed appealingly. "No, Irma, I have not ceased to love him in a way, but you must remember that we were together but a short time. I have not mourned for him all these years," she said. "He has mourned for you," I replied. "I realized it was his duty to make his home happy if possible," she answered. "His wife was a slave to morphine. Did you know that she committed suicide?" I asked. "Indeed I did not!" she said with amazement. "How sad! I saw a notice of her death in a paper, that was all. My heart is pained, dear Irma, by what you

have revealed. How deeply you have suffered," and her eyes became suffused with tears.

"My life is all before me," I somewhat bravely replied, "but my father has been deprived by fate of years and years of happiness, and I wish that he might know joy once more. Will you not go home with me and help to make my father happy?" I asked beseechingly.

"I hardly feel acquainted with your father after all these years, Irma," she said with a smile.

"I would like to feel that my parents are legally married," I urged, "before I take the marriage vows." "When do you intend marrying?" she asked. "Not until my father and mother are made one," I replied, as I fondly kissed her. Then she spoke of my betrothed. "You have made a wise choice, Irma. No woman can love wisely and well unless she sees that her husband is a man of high principles more than aught else. I am as capable of loving as I was in the days of my youth, for the heart never grows old. I could appreciate love today more than I could the day I was married. But I must meet your father, I must judge for myself if he still has a secret love for me. We all change with vicissitudes of time and experience and many clouds intervene to darken the glowing visions of youth. I may not find him all that he was in the old days. If your father and mother are ever married it must not be to redeem the past. It must not be for your own sweet sake even, but for love's sake. Gerald Strong will love you none the less if we are never married. He is as far above caring about your birth as the heavens are above the earth. Shall you love me less if I decide not to marry your father, Irma?" "No, mother, I shall never love you

less than I do now, but if you consent to make my father happy, as I feel that you can, I shall love you more than I do at present." She tenderly gazed into my eyes for a moment then remarked smilingly, "Your appeal to my heart is a very eloquent one, dear Irma, but I must not decide now."

"Do you sing, Irma?" she asked, after a short pause. "I do not, but my father has told me that you do. He said that he used to call you his 'wild bird.'" "Well, the experiences through which I have passed have tamed me somewhat," she pleasantly replied as she approached the piano. The selection she rendered was soft, low, and sad. She seemed to be reviewing in the pathos of harmony all the turbulent past. By nature she was cheerful and joyous, I knew full well, and I hoped that she would respond to the warmth of my father's love. I did not wonder or doubt that he still most sincerely loved her, for her intellectual endowments were apparent to the most casual observer and her personal magnetism unresistibly captivating. While listening to her brilliant conversation concerning the beauties and grandeurs of the old world I felt that my own life and accomplishments were very incomplete. I, too, would travel and see the gay world my mother pictured so vividly, I mused. "Could we not go to Europe on our wedding trip?" I asked myself. Better still could we not all go together! Life was worth living at last. No more dull days; no more bitter repining; no more weary longing for happiness! I returned to my father's house as happy as it was possible for mortal to be, and though I missed Helen every day, yet I felt that she was happier now than she had been on earth. For hath He not said, "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

CHAPTER XVIII

Wrongs Made Right

"NO, I did not bring her home with me, father; she will have to be wooed and won all over again before she returns to you," I exclaimed as my father met me in the hall. He did not speak, but went to his luxuriant library, where he paced up and down the floor like a man beside himself. He was very despondent. "Leave me alone," he said, but I did not accede to his request. He grew calmer after a while. "Do I look very old, Irma?" he asked. "Older than she does, father," I replied. "Oh, I long to be my old self again!" he exclaimed. "At her touch you will be; your entire life will change as mine has. My newfound mother has the most restful presence of any person I ever knew. I have had such a happy day with her, and have felt so joyous and refreshed through her influence." "I will go to see her tomorrow, and I hope to win her affection again," he said. "Do not try to be a boy again, father. You cannot retain your youth and repeat and perpetuate the pleasures of youth. I could not say of my mother that she appeared young. In fact, you do not think of age in connection with her, but I have the impression that it would be impossible for a young person to be as interesting as she is. Women are more receptive than men, and my mother has traveled and studied all these years, while you have brooded over

your sad fate."

"Madelaine never loved me as intensely as I did her," he exclaimed. "I have not much hope of winning her again, but I trust I may be successful in securing at least her confidence and priceless regard."

My father always had a half diffident way, and his noble face and fine form were supplemented by a manner most gentle and kind. Intellectually he was my mother's equal, but spiritually they lived in different worlds. My mother was not sanctimonious nor yet was she a dweller in the valleys of superstition, but she appeared to have a broad and intuitive conception of the divine truth, and her ready analysis and interpretation of spiritual things was a benediction for those favored with her companionship. "Father, you have not seen her for over twenty years. Is it not possible that you may not care for her as much as formerly? You love her for the old time's sake, and you doubtless may find her in many respects greatly changed," I said. "If I cannot win her I have no desire to live," he replied, and I almost echoed his wish in my heart, for I believed that he would become a mental wreck if she would not turn to him, this suspense was wearing upon him so.

That evening my father was taken suddenly ill with one of his heart attacks. I had never seen him so dangerously ill. The good old doctor shook his head sadly. "I cannot tell you which way it will turn," he said, "there is just about an even chance for him."

My father himself realized his critical condition and desired Gerald to go for my mother. The doctor said he ought not to see any one but his own family, but that it would be safer to grant his request than to refuse him.

It was a time of great mental strain for us all. "His life is in the balance," the doctor said, shaking his head.

One hour had passed slowly away when Gerald returned with my mother. She went at once to the room where he lay like a sleeping child, and stood beside his bed gazing down upon him with a sorrowful face. After a restless movement he opened wide his eyes and looked straight into her face. "It is Madelaine!" he said, and then sank back as though overcome with emotion. At length he spoke to her in a low but distinct voice:

"It is good of you to come to me at this time, and I thank you, Madelaine. Do you care whether I live or die? Will you forgive me for deceiving you all these years?"

For a moment she hesitated. She seemed to fail to grasp the full significance of what he was saying. He stretched out his hand to her. She took it and in her fervent clasp were the thrilling pulsations of her heart which assured him he was forgiven. She leaned over him with a sob and their lips met. It was the kiss of holy love.

The night wore on. Neither my father nor Madelaine spoke again until dawn broke. My father was fighting for his life, and my mother was praying for him. At midnight the nurse declared that he was better, and when the doctor came he said that he was out of danger. "The improvement is marvelous!" he exclaimed. "Promise me that you will remain with me, Madelaine," said my father. She gave him an encouraging smile and bid him keep quiet. It was manifest that she was deeply stirred by his beseeching tone. From this time he made rapid improvement and he was able to sit up the follow-

ing day. A few days later my mother came to live with us permanently, giving up her handsome suite of rooms in the hotel. In a week my father seemed fully restored to health. "At Madelaine's touch my life changed," he said. "I have not felt so well for many years. My heart trouble has left me forevermore I firmly believe," he remarked one evening when we were all together in the parlor. "A right mental attitude usually brings health and happiness," said Gerald. He was indeed a changed man. Despondency had given place to exhilaration and prospective joy. What a marvelous improvement! If human love can work such results, what may not Divine love do if we reach out after it.

Now that my mother had promised to be legally united to my father, Gerald was anxious to make me his wife and take me to his home in the West; but I would not consent to be married until after my parents were. My mother said that she would be glad to have me all to herself for a while. "I lost your babyhood and childhood, and I long to keep you with me a few months before you marry." So she told Gerald that he must not be selfish. "'Patient waiters are no losers' has ever been my motto," said Gerald, and even though it is extremely hard, I must then return to Seattle without my bride, for in that section as elsewhere, fortunes are lost as easily as they are won, and I must return to the supervision of my business without delay. His mother was also impatient for the return of her children, and little granddaughter. It is sweet to part when we are soon to meet, but not so sweet by far when we are to be widely separated, and not to meet for some time. I managed to appear very brave and cheerful, knowing it

was for the best, and that it would make my mother happy. So, after an affectionate parting, Gerald returned with Fred and Violette, and sweet little Helen Irma. And with the new parental atmosphere of affection which environed me and the bright prospects of the future which buoyed me up the days were not even lonely after their departure. No one, it seemed to me, could be lonely with my beautiful mother. Her helpful counsel and spiritual influence was a new and delightful revelation to me. I loved her more and more each day, and my father was so fondly devoted to her that our home at last seemed to be an ideal one. One morning as my father and mother sat in the sunshine, side by side, I heard him tell her that his cup of happiness was full to the brim. "I am happier than I ever was before," he said. "Even when we were in the sunny South together, I was not so happy as I am at the present time." My mother returned his earnest gaze of admiration which accompanied his words with a radiant smile that reflected her own joy, and gently replied, "Man's cup of happiness may always be full to the brim if he will constantly seek deeper after the purer joys as he journeys through life. If we persistently seek the best we shall find it. 'Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.' Man finds what he believes in. 'To know Him aright is Life Eternal.'" My father loved to listen to her. His heart seemed to beat a responsive echo to every word that she uttered. He spoke to her of his youth. "My heart was full of sinless hope," he said, "and in maturer years it seemed full of hopeless sin — the sin of deception." Sometimes the soul grows by leaps and bounds, and my father, under the gentle and elevating influence

that now entered into his life, would soon find that perfect peace which passeth all understanding — the peace which my mother knew. I loved to see them together, my father so gentle and kind, and my mother so radiantly happy.

The little sheaf of letters which I received each week was a joy to me. Violette wrote almost as frequently as Gerald, and she always mentioned Helen, her beautiful sister, who had passed on in the morning of life. "I shall never cease to love Helen," she wrote, "and Fred's grief is as keen as ever." They knew not the secret my father had kept all of those years. No one would ever know, but we four — my father and mother, Gerald and I. My parents decided to be married very quietly on New Year's eve, and the June following Gerald was coming, and we were planning to all cross the Atlantic. I did not want to be separated from my parents even for a wedding trip.

They were married as they had planned. There was no one present but the minister, our friend Miss Black, and myself. Rev. Mr. Greenwood performed the ceremony, little thinking they had been through the same ceremony together more than twenty years before. And of course he was wholly unconscious also that my father was his father-in-law, and I his sister-in-law. It was decided that this disclosure was unnecessary. My father presented Mr. Greenwood with a deed of the house in which he and Helen had lived since marriage. In this act we all rejoiced and the recipient was profoundly grateful.

My mother was a beautiful bride even if there were silver threads in her hair, and my father was happy at

last.

"When you are married, my sweet daughter, it shall be a brilliant affair." Oh, how my mother entered into all my hopes and joys. I was proud and glad to call her "mother" before my friends and acquaintances. When any one speaks of her as my step-mother it pains me exceedingly. I wish I could prevent that awkward and unlovely title ever being bestowed upon her. She is my "mother" — the sweetest and dearest of all earthly names — and oh, how much I love her!

One day my mother and I were talking about Gerald (he is our favorite topic when alone, for I love to hear her praise him). "Oh, what beautiful mansions there are in his soul," she said. "I realized this when I crossed the ocean on the same steamer with Gerald Strong and learned the purity, strength, and nobility of his character. Never forget, my child, that the kingdom of heaven is within. At that time I thought how proud I would be could I have the right to call Gerald Strong my 'son.'" "That right I trust will soon be yours, dear mother," I happily said, "and I shall love to hear you call him so. I feel that I can never leave you and father. Life is too short for us to be separated."

"We will cling to one another. We will not live apart, my daughter. I rejoice in the prospect that we all are going abroad after you are married. I feel at home in the old world, and when we return we will make you a protracted visit in Seattle. We never will be separated for any length of time until death separates us. I care not for society so much as I do for the heartfelt love of my own dear ones." In these assurances of maternal love and devotion, comparatively new to me until recently,

I found great comfort.

This very day I received a letter from Gerald. It was a long one and will never be destroyed. The following is an extract:

"Next Wednesday, dear Irma, I shall make you my wife, and the sharer of my future happiness. Then joy as of angels shall be ours, and music as of seraphim shall greet our entrance into this beautiful world! I shall never cease to thank 'our Father' for His protecting care and my success."

Next Wednesday I shall stand by his side as his wife, and walk with him until life's journey is ended. He is coming tomorrow and I am counting the minutes.

I feel sure that my friends who have read this little story of my life will wish me much joy as I leave the past, darkened by sin and sorrow, and step gladly into the bright future that opens before me, surrounded by a father's and mother's love and leaning on the arm of my Heart's Idol — Gerald Strong.